



**LEAN MEN (II)**

**BY RALPH BATES**

### PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Readers not already on our mailing list who would like to know when new books are added to the Penguin Series should write their name and address on a postcard and post it to Penguin Books Ltd.

Suggestions for new titles are welcome.

# LEAN MEN

BY  
RALPH BATES

*In two volumes : Volume Two*



PENGUIN BOOKS LIMITED

HARMONDSWORTH MIDDLESEX ENGLAND



First published JULY 1934  
Published in Penguin Books 1938

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN FOR PENGUIN BOOKS LTD., BY  
WYMAN & SONS LIMITED, LONDON, READING AND FAKENHAM.

TO ROSALEEN AND WINIFRED

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE historical events in this novel of the Spanish Revolution have been described faithfully, nevertheless with one exception no character is to be taken as the portrait of an actual person. I have the permission of the exception to do as I wish with him.

# CONTENTS

## BOOK III

### FLAME IN THE CRATER

CHAPTER:	PAGE
XXV. STORMS IN APRIL - - - - -	11
XXV. DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE - - - - -	35
XXI. RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT - - - - -	62
XXII. RESOLUTION OF DISSONANCE - - - - -	87
XXIII. MERMAID - - - - -	92
XXIV. TORRELLAS CLOISTERS - - - - -	120
XXV. THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT - - - - -	129

## BOOK IV

### ERUPTION

XXVI. ANONYMOUS DEATH - - - - -	147
XXVII. IMAGE OF OUR LADY - - - - -	163
XXVIII. SECOND IMAGE - - - - -	188
XXIX. CALL TO BATTLE - - - - -	197
XXX. RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE - - - - -	206
XXXI. OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS - - - - -	216
XXXII. VIGIL - - - - -	228
XXXIII. TOO MUCH LEAD - - - - -	235



BOOK III  
FLAME IN THE CRATER



## CHAPTER XIX

### STORMS IN APRIL

#### *The fourteenth of April*

SINCE the night of the twelfth, the city had not slept. The cafés, restaurants, clubs and plazas had been full night and day, tired waiters cheerfully struggling to keep upon their feet. The atmosphere bore a heavy surcharge of tension, rumours of risings, of Alfonso's abdication, of the declaration of a republic flashed continually through the sensitive circuits of the enthusiastic populace. Alarmist rumours of British intervention—the constant dread of Spanish revolutionary circles—flew from mouth to mouth. The British Navy had appeared off Gijón, off Santander, off Cadiz, had concentrated at Gibraltar, was even now steaming up to Barcelona, decks cleared: Málaga had been bombarded. The Republican leaders were doing their best to stamp out these reports, but unavailingly. Many of these rumours began among the defeated monarchists.

The crowds that thronged the polling booths on the twelfth had left the issue in no doubt as far as the Catalan capital was concerned. There would be an overwhelming majority for the candidates of the Left, for Macià's "ad hoc" party of quasi-socialist republicans. De Rivière, returned post-haste from Paris, had been acclaimed and boisterously handled by enthusiastic throngs; reverence for age alone had prevented the same treatment being given to Macià himself. And then, upon the morning of the fourteenth, while the streets and Rondas were streaming with flag-waving, banner-carrying, confetti-strewing crowds chanting the forbidden "Reapers," Companys, the lawyer of the syndicates, had fulfilled a rash election promise. The newspapers, especially those of the Right, had made much of his declaration, these latter knowing that it would procure him several years of imprisonment



## LEAN MEN

should the elections fail to effect a governmental change. "Señor Companys pledges himself to take possession of the City Hall should the elections yield Republican victory."

The elections had been a Republican victory. The ludicrous error of the Dictatorship had produced the inevitable. Many times Francis had laughed heartily over the political incompetence of Aznar and Alfonso. The decision to permit elections was itself a mistake of the first magnitude, for many reasons. The extent of public sympathy with Galán and Hernández, the executive leaders of the Jaca rising, had shown that much more widespread dissatisfaction existed than the Dictatorship had imagined. Even the bishop of the diocese had appealed for clemency, an unheard-of charity, and the ignoring of this appeal had provided the public with a pair of martyrs. In every town throughout Spain there was to be a Galán and Hernández Street or Plaza within a few days.

Then the inquiry into the ramifications of the December plot among the army had been silenced. It had become clear that the army was strongly disaffected; Alfonso had himself to thank for this. Previously to the present crisis he had interfered with the ancient privileges of the Artillery, the aristocratic and tradition-bound department of the army. His intervention had been justified from a military standpoint; yet, undertaken during an epoch when his throne depended upon their loyalty, it had been folly. The Spanish aristocracy is invariably more loyal to its own dignity than to the crown. Alfonso XIII, King of all Spaniards, had not known that elemental fact about Spain. The error committed, he had followed with the unpardonable stupidity of threatening the recalcitrant Artillery garrisons with a body of Infantry, the despised force of conscript rankers and petty landlords and untitled officers. Atrocious conditions in the ranks, incompetence above, the absence of discipline and military science in all departments, the perpetual throwing of the army into political adventures, the natural class antagonisms within the army itself, unchecked by any profound feeling of nationalism or other rigours than those set in motion by the confidant and the spy, all this had divided the army into two parties, one of them secret but none the less real.

The civilian ramifications of the December attempt must also have been well known to the monarchy. There was not

## STORMS IN APRIL

a city, town or reasonably large village in which a Revolutionary Committee had not existed, ready to seize power had not dalliance and division of the Republican Alliance, lack of synchronization and the socialist desertion in Madrid frustrated the nation-wide desire for a change. These things being known, the elections were risible folly on the part of the king. It must have been clear that there was the practical certainty of a Republican victory, in which event the army could not be relied upon to cancel the results, and also that the Republican leaders, whatever their religious profession and ultimate social creeds, were prepared to go as far as civil war, hitherto an extremism confined to the left and to the monarchy.

In Charing's opinion one course only had been open to Alfonso: warily and patiently to live down the storm by effecting reforms and relaxations such as, for example, radical improvements in the conditions of the conscript. Decent clothing and a mere sufficiency of food would have worked wonders. He had always thought that six months of the British civil service would have maintained the Spanish crown for another decade; a reform throughout the incredibly corrupt administration would have soothed away vast irritation. But these things had their roots in the very character of the king, even more so in the institution of monarchy; reform had been impossible.

Had the king been able to convey the mere impression of detachment from the two divinely appointed sections of the community, the Church and Capital, he would have profited greatly. But here again the fault, though perhaps minute, lay in the nature of those two allies. There was just one accomplishment the Spanish Church had not been able to acquire. Visibly holy, transparently honest and overflowing with charity towards those whose unhappy chance had led them to differ from her as by the special grace of the Holy Ghost she undeniably was, the Spanish Church had never known how to make herself respected by her enemies or even by a large part of those who benefited by her monopoly of grace. Zamora, a catholic, headed the republican movement, itself pledged drastically to curtail the privileges of the Church. Zamora's never-ending stickling as much as anything had ensured the failure of the December attempt, but he had

## LEAN MEN

embarked upon an enterprise that would not leave the Church intact and succeed in its other objective. So too with Capital. Moderate Catalan Separatists at one time, the manufacturers of Catalunya had played with Republicanism, had even flirted with the syndicates. This because the predominant agrarian mentality of an aristocratic court had not favoured their desires in such things as tariffs and financial policies.

But the undeclared civil war of 1919-1922, the rise of revolutionary movements and the example of Russia, had made them hasten to the support of the Dictatorship, declared by Primo de Rivera in the streets of Barcelona. Their fiscal ideals realized, agitation repressed, conditions lowered, and above all the bliss of apparent stability, had made them fervent monarchists, even though the country might starve in silence, the national debt soar upward and almost the whole of national intelligence revolt openly or in secret. Afraid and incapable of making their own revolution against the feudal monarchy, as the French and English forerunners of their class had done, they had compounded with it. Alfonso was to be the scapegoat for the crimes and follies of his two allies and of the great landlords of Andalusia, as much as for his own sins.

The decision that the elections should be municipal had been the crowning blunder. It had the result of throwing the emphasis upon the cities and towns rather than upon the villages, which, clustered round a Republican centre, often neutralized it in a parliamentary campaign by sheer reactionary inertia. On April the thirteenth the declared results had astonished even the Republicans; of the forty-six principal cities, forty-one had returned Republican majorities. It mattered nothing that the hundreds of backward villages adhered to their old faith. Everyone had known that the landlords would be customarily successful in preventing or directing the elections.

What was happening in Madrid was only known confusedly in Barcelona, nor was it for the moment a matter of public care. Companys had been elected and, quixotically faithful to a promise (a fact which threw in doubt his aptitude for politics), had gone to the City Hall with four or five friends. Entering the building, he had demanded of the Chief of Police that he should place himself at the disposition of the new authority, and backed by an ever-growing following of

## STORMS IN APRIL

secretaries, typists, clerks and office boys, had penetrated to the office of the Dictatorial mayor, whom he first ejected and then, carrying the civic mace, had emerged on to the balcony and hung out the Republican tricolour in declaration of the Republic, before a mere handful of witnesses below. The news of the foolhardy act had recharged the tired city. Indescribable scenes of enthusiasm had been witnessed upon the Rondas. Then in the early hours of the following morning it became known that Alfonso had abdicated, that in Madrid the new Republic had been established for the whole of Spain, and that Catalunya was not isolated.

The relief swept everyone into the streets once more ; men embraced enemy and friends alike, catholic and atheist shook hands, women sang the songs of rebellion, the flags of Catalunya and Spain were twined together and hung upon lamp-posts and trees. Worker and professional man, even members of the aloof classes joined in one laughing, shouting, singing, weeping throng of rejoicers upon the fluttering streets. For a day the struggle of classes, the war of ideas, of anarchist, nihilist, communist, socialist, conservative and liberal seemed alike to have been forgotten. To sing, to dance, to embrace and make friendships was the heart-bursting necessity of all people after the long years of spy-tormented, police-ridden dictatorship. Hurriedly scrawled placards in Catalan, the once forbidden tongue, were hung from balconies, the emergency newspaper editions appeared with columns in the native language, it became at once a badge of faith and the supremest joy to greet strangers with the colloquial speech. Parties of boys and girls and young men and women raced along the pavements festooned with the mauve ribbons of the republican movement hurriedly turned out of warehouses and sold at exorbitant prices. Here and there in the plazas rings of shining-faced people were dancing the sardana, that most stately and spiritual of dances which is the symbol of Catalunya, to the chanting of an arrangement of " The Reapers." The rigidest restraints of custom were swept aside, youths meeting girls wearing some gay profession of faith seized them and received kisses freely and purely given.

All day long the streets were a tossing blaze of colour. Not a single wearer of the priestly black was to be seen. The clergy were almost the only non-aristocratic class to take no part in

## LEAN MEN

the rejoicings, these and the proprietors of folly. The houses and music halls of Paralelo that night were deserted. La Torera herself led a sardana group at the outlet of Asalto, dressed in a reddish-purple costume, the nearest the ransacked wardrobe of the Pompeya could approach to the popular mauve.

There was little execration of the departing king; here and there a disfigured portrait hung from a balcony, a few cries of "Death to the King" were to be heard at rare intervals. For the rest, relief was the predominant emotion.

### *The fifteenth of April*

The general strike was rapidly growing solid throughout all branches of industry; more would probably join in after the meeting in the little plaza of Urquinaona, now packed with black-shirted, white-vested or blue-coated workers, and more were surging in from the direction of the Norte Station; the underground station in the centre of the plaza was pouring out its contribution. The principal orators were speaking from a cart, others had mounted platforms improvised from café tables and chairs; the red and yellow awning of a café whose proprietor had not hung out the strip of purple bunting in which was salvation, had been flung over the table and chairs. The orator, an anarchist named Sarria, with the sure touch of the demagogue had aroused a storm of applause as he referred to the "carpet which reaction has been compelled to lay beneath the feet of the workers."

"It seems the Spanish worker has much to learn," commented Alonso as Sarria began to denounce the employers for not agreeing to pay wages for the preceding day's holiday. "It makes me sick to listen to that fellow."

The orator, black-shirted and white-faced, was intoxicated with doctrine and emotion, they could make little sense of his utterances. He seemed to vocalize all the wild rumours, all the animal fears and enthusiasms that surged in the collective mentality before him. It really seemed to Francis that Sarria was some kind of loud-speaker for the confused and conflicting hysteria that the last few days had raised. Conscious control of words and thoughts seemed to have disappeared from his speech, he was behaving as the leader of a frustrated wolf-pack might behave. At one minute he would be screaming praises of

## STORMS IN APRIL

the "Sacred Revolution," at the next wailing over the loss of brave *compañeros*, and then without preparation he would fling some impossible proposal before the crowd.

"Let's listen to Peiró," said Francis abruptly, "he's over at the principal platform." They forced their way through the throng and tried to approach the cart. Those around the vehicle would permit no approach. Peiró was reasoning more calmly with his hearers; his speech appeared to consist of alternate appeals to the audience to be faithful to the National Confederation of Syndicates and to be mindful of their dignity as workers.

"That word dignity is doing a lot of work to-day, boy," muttered Alonso after the sixth or seventh hearing of it. Another orator followed and took a quarter of an hour to explain why he had mounted the platform after refusing to subscribe to the manifesto which had called the meeting.

"Now it's the word 'conscience,'" whispered Alonso after a while. "We're in respectable company to-day. Don't you feel a bit of a low sort of serpent, Tesh?"

"Sure," muttered Texido with a hint of bad temper.

During this speech there was a sudden hoarse and undistinguishable burst of shouting behind them. Everyone ceased to pay attention to the speaker upon the cart. Through the waving arms they could see Sarria screaming at the crowd, repeating the same phrase again and again. The words they could not make out. The crowd was growing more and more excited, the furthest ranks round the improvised platform had taken up Sarria's refrain and were delivering it like a sing-song litany, at every moment growing nearer. They could distinguish the final drumlike "O" with which the phrase terminated. The litany was suddenly punctuated by a crash of glass. "It's the café window," shouted Elipe, struggling to join them. As if the act of violence had released fresh energy, the cry leapt nearer to them. "Cambó . . . Cambó"; they could distinguish the name of that discredited banker-politician, financial adviser and theoretical counsellor of the Dictatorship. Then a repeated sibilance was added to the phrase. "Set fire to the house of Cambó!"

The cry grew deep around them, they could hear the rhythmic breathing of the crowd as it chanted the refrain, it was like the baying of some vast animal, single and undivided.

## LEAN MEN

The shouting surged past them and behind and then broke out upon the platform. A youth began to scream; "Set fire to the house of Cambó!" and the cry went on down the columns of people in the side streets, its synchronization faulty, so that presently two huge pistons of sound were throbbing backwards and forwards against one another. Francis found the rhythmical effect enthralling and of impressive grandeur; and then suddenly the rhythms disappeared and were replaced by a confused crashing of strident cries in front, followed by a shuffling of canvas-shoed feet. The wall of flesh before them yielded without warning.

"Keep together, Elipe, Elipe! Alonso—together!" shouted Francis as they were swept forward. The crowd ahead was yelling "Cambó, Cambó!" ceaselessly. "Try to draw to the side and then out by a side street," shouted Charing.

They were dragged onwards up a broad street, and then as they crossed another there was a momentary check. Before the mob three mounted urban guards accompanied by several on foot were holding rifles at the horizontal.

"This way," said Elipe. "Follow me, boys, stick to me, I lodge just off here." The docker butted and kicked through the indifferent components of the pack around him. "We can get through the *estanco*," yelled the strong man. They pressed into the tobacco shop, the doors of which the concessionaire was hastily trying to close. Elipe assisted the man to shoot the bolts and fix the bars, and then said: "See here, chum, you've got a way through, haven't you? I expect you remember my dial, don't you, I always buy my stamps here." The strong man tapped the post box hanging on the wall.

"Yes, sir, I do. . . . Yes, I've got a way out—if you gentlemen will go quietly through I've no objection, what's up outside?"

"Going to roast old Cambó," replied Alonso. "What a joke! He was writing in *La Veu* a few days ago that the days of revolutions were over—that's what they'll be after him for, I guess."

There was a fresh burst of shouting outside.

"Well—he's asked for it," answered the concessionaire. "By the way, sir," he continued, addressing Elipe, "you didn't put enough stamps by half on that last letter of yours, the collector slung it out, he thought you'd rather put more on than make the receiver pay."

## STORMS IN APRIL

"Jesus—that's a fat one," remarked Alonso to the concessionaire as he produced the letter.

"Sure—it's to a lady, of course," replied the tobacconist, winking at Alonso. "One of those Mallorcan countesses, I expect."

"A señorita—eh?" Alonso's ejaculation was sharp.

"That's right, sir—ask him, look at his face."

"This way through, boss," interjected Vilanova. "Do you mind leading us?"

They followed the tobacconist and presently emerged on to a street parallel with the one in which the incendiary crowd had been stayed. A single carbine rang out and was followed by a rush of feet.

"Come on," yelled Alonso. "I want to see this. Oh, mammy! there's going to be some fireworks in the park to-night!" They followed the Murcian through two streets. "There it is—that large one with the architectural tripe round the door," panted Alonso as the others drew level. "Let's go over to that corner, we shall be on the edge of the crowd."

"No fear," the dwarf was scornful. "It's the ones on the edge who get the police bullets and the horses' hoofs. I'm going in," saying which he ran forward and dodged past a civil guard who advanced from the porch of Cambó's house.

Francis and the group moved sideways, but not quickly enough to avoid being caught up in the rush of the side-spill of crowd which had swept round by the streets enclosing the block. The guard drew his Mauser and with a shout of warning fired a round into the air. The warning was useless, there was no arresting the converging streams. The civil guard, realizing this, tried to replace his weapon: the front ranks were upon him before he could retreat to the porch. Alonso and Francis had kept together, Elípe had been torn away from them in the first rush. Vilanova was not to be seen. The impulse of the second column grew greater, and Francis was thrust against the guard, and they tipped over the step of the porch, falling with Alonso and several workers on top of him. The guard was struggling to draw his pistol while Alonso was trying to pin his arm to the ground.

"Don't be a fool, man," Francis yelled.



## LEAN MEN

"Chuck it, you bloody idiot," urged Alonso through his teeth. "What's the good of shooting now?"

"They'll kill me," panted the guard.

The assertion was likely to prove correct, thought Francis with disinterested judgment, and then suddenly his mind rebelled at the thought of witnessing this man's death. It was not at first simple horror of death, nor was it a sentimental desire for "fair play"; that plea was as a rule nothing more than a convenient hypocrisy for obtaining an unfair advantage. He knew the magnanimity on the part of the assaulters would give the guard an opportunity to inform, of which he would not deny himself; the Civil would certainly have no notion of fair play. Mixed with repugnance was a vehement protest against the brutal inutility of such a killing, not even condonable as a revenge. To enlist in the Civil Guard was tantamount to declaring oneself ready for civil war; revenge might properly be taken upon that body, therefore, but deliberately, not by casual wreaking of mob will upon the first unhappy victim of chance. And then these considerations, thoroughly developed and contemplated clearly as if they were concrete entities in those few seconds of time, vanished utterly and left him with something approaching animal panic before imminent death.

"We shall have to do something," he yelled at Alonso.

"They'll kill him; we can't let them do it."

The confusion suddenly disentangled itself and the fallen workers struggled to their feet. The guard relinquished the attempt to open fire and abandoned the Mauser to Alonso's grasp. They sat up, the Civil groaning with the pain of the grinding pressure of the step edge in his back.

"We shall have to do something," Francis repeated desperately.

"Hell! Do?" gasped Alonso. "Try singing to 'em . . . step dance." He could barely hear the Murcian through the high-pitched roar and the splintering of window glass. The guard hammered on the door with the ball of his hand. Charing frantically expostulated with him, it was just possible the guard's mate inside might attempt the chivalry of opening the door, but in that case he would be logically certain to shoot at Alonso and himself instantaneously, without waiting for explanation. Then as the clamour rose to a higher pitch

## STORMS IN APRIL

he heard Alonso shouting in his ear : " Set 'em on something else. . . . Model . . . that's it . . . prison." He did not catch the words clearly, but the sense he guessed at.

The guard began to struggle to his feet.

" Get down, man," Francis yelled, " your uniform . . ." and then once more he was compelled to wrestle for the Mauser as the guard's hand flew to the weapon, released by Alonso who had scrambled up on to a projection of the pillar. The docker shouted something at the nearest ranks ; some of them grasped his meaning and, turning about, repeated them. Stones continued to whizz through the air, marksmen in a tree across the road were firing steadily at the upper windows, splinters of glass were falling dangerously into the crowd. A sudden shriek caused a burst of protest from those near the front, directed against the marksmen in the tree. Gesticulations and cries had no effect, there was an ineffectual eddy of movement in the direction of the tree and a lull in the shouting of " Cambó."

This was the Murcian's opportunity.

" Compañeros," he roared, pulling out a pipelighter with his free hand and igniting it. " Compañeros ! "

About a third of the crowd appeared to pay attention to his words.

" Shame on you ! Shame on you ! So the workers of Barcelona disgrace themselves by wasting time on the burning of houses ! The burning of houses that are empty while the prisons of the city are full, packed with prisoners of their own blood. Shame on you, I say—if you want to destroy, why don't you break open the Model Prison ? Why don't you release your comrades in the dungeons of the Civil Governor's gaol ? Why not smash the doors of Montjuich ? Up there on the mountain are hundreds of your brothers——"

His opening words had been repeated by those nearest ; the words travelled outwards with electric speed and the crowd grew quiet save for isolated points of disturbance.

" Compañeros ! " repeated Alonso, straining his voice. " Are you going to lay this shame upon yourselves ? Is your first act to be one of useless vengeance while your brothers are crying for justice in their dungeons ? "

Someone emerging from the lower branches of the tree shouted defiance of the Murcian.

## LEAN MEN

"Set fire to the house first, put a bullet through Cambó!"

There were shouts of approval.

"What?" roared Alonso. "Are you going to listen to a bloody monkey chucking coconuts . . .?"

There was a gust of laughter.

"See here . . ." continued the docker reigniting the lighter.

"If you lay your hands to anything, to a single stone or scrap of iron before flinging open the gates of the Model Prison—the Bastille of Barcelona"—a single shot rang out from the higher branches—"your honour goes out like that," and he extinguished the flame with a prodigious puff. "To the Model Prison!" there was a roar of cheering as he waved towards the west end of the city. The crowd broke away and gathered pace as it streamed along the street.

"To the Model Prison!"

As Francis and Alonso moved away from the steps the door opened behind them and another guard emerged and helped his companion into the house. They turned and Alonso darted over to the base of the tree, from the agitated foliage of which a pair of legs was dangling. The man dropped to the pavement.

"So, you bloody rat," he murmured through his teeth and swung a vicious blow into the marksman's face. Francis flung his arms round the Murcian as he was leaping forward to kick the prostrate man. The marksman was the dwarf Isidro.

Alonso's face was white with passion, his strength had left him and he was unable to free himself.

"Alonso," shouted Francis, "come to your senses, man!" The Murcian was trembling and cursing through clenched teeth. "Let me go . . . by the Virgin's Child . . . I'll kill him . . . the bloody rat." A chromium-plated pistol protruded from the dwarf's pocket.

Francis tightened his grasp in silence, it was no use arguing with that blind passion. The door of Cambó's house rattled open, and still Alonso struggled to get at the fallen man, now showing signs of coming to himself. With a swift movement Francis reversed their relative positions, and before Alonso could recover himself, stooped over the stirring man and thrust the pistol butt down in his pocket. The Murcian made no attempt to rush upon the dwarf, he seemed paralysed with rage or the reaction from it.

## STORMS IN APRIL

The two guards once more entered the house and shut the door. Francis forced the dwarf's head between his knees and hammered up and down his spine. Presently Isidro struggled jerkily, and when assisted rose to his feet. A clattering of hoofs sounded upon the other side of the block.

"This way," Francis ejaculated, impelling the dwarf. Alonso ran sickily behind. . . .

In the Plaza Real they bought a copy of *El Noticiero*. They read that Companys, now Civil Governor, had taken two measures to counter the general strike. He had declared the day a public holiday so that the workers might at once be loyal to their Federations and obedient to the representative of Madrid. He had also commanded that the ornamental fountains in Monjuich Park should be set in play in order to offer diversion to the people. This was at the hour when the masses were storming the Model Prison.

### *The sixteenth of April*

The salon at the Centre was full of associates discussing the events and problems of the preceding day, the storming of the Model Prison and the releasing of prisoners, the Manifesto issued by the Provisional Government in Madrid and the possible attitude of the Federation of Syndicates. Already in its first statement the Government had planted the seeds of strife; modelled upon the political sentiments embodied in the English Constitution, its third article guaranteed liberty of religious beliefs and cults. This was sufficient in itself to embitter ecclesiastical antagonism, already fearful that the burden of its income of some sixty or seventy millions of pesetas annually would be removed from the taxpayer's shoulders. Article 5 guaranteed the sanctity of private property, and though this provision, like the other, was only an interim measure, already the divergence of classes could be sensed. Astute assessors were already foretelling division and irresolution and, unless revolutionary action were carried to a successful conclusion, the crumbling of the Republic. But in the Centre as everywhere else, conversation tended to remain upon the surface of events, it was the drama of the nascent revolution which engaged interests, even the discussion of principles became pictorial. The abdication of Alfonso, indeed, was already felt to be a comparatively unimportant

## LEAN MEN

event—the question was “Where was Spain going?”—towards a modest Liberalism within a democratic framework, or further, to become the second worker’s State in Europe? The absence of great and disciplined political parties, of the Right as of the Left, left discussion and project in a nebulous condition. Among the working classes and the lower middle class, nevertheless, there was unanimous desire for something more advanced than a copy of English democracy.

At the Murcian’s table Vilanova was explaining to Valls, who had hastily returned from his field commission, and to Alonso and Francis, how the workers had broken open the Model. Not only that prison but others of the city had been stormed. It was the most exciting topic of the day.

“After we left Cambó’s shanty we went up the Railway Diagonal towards the Alfonso XII barracks. Elipe and I went round by taxi, it was no use getting into that jam . . . Jesus . . . you should have seen it! It’s a marvel how the news gets round. I suppose the idea must have been in everybody’s head, for by the time we reached Borell all Paralelo was rushing into the Diagonal—the word must have gone ahead of the crowd in some way—there were thousands of them all jammed in between the railway wall and the houses, on each side of the line. Reminded me of old Miró’s description of the herring rut. We got right into the front of it . . . no, there was no danger, for the prison guard just slammed the gates and went inside. In fact they made no kind of resistance whatever. They must have kept the wires hot, though, because almost at once a detachment of infantry tried to leave the Alfonso XII barracks on the other side of the line. They couldn’t get out, or wouldn’t—women climbed up on to the railway wall and shrieked at them—that’s a nasty drop into the cutting on the other side—they say one went over. The chaps round the barracks gate formed a solid jam and then lifted a speaker up—Pestaña, they say—anyway, the lieutenant in charge ordered the detachment inside again. So far as I could see there wasn’t a single ugly incident. Most of the shops shut up of course—there aren’t many—the only disturbance was at a bookshop on the corner where one or two copies of *El Debate* were hung on the line over the stall. They went west, naturally, but apart from that, nothing. The gates gave a lot of trouble, of course, and there might have been . . .”

## STORMS IN APRIL

"Is it right they burst them open with a telegraph pole?" interjected Alonso. "That's what I heard."

"Telegraph pole my foot! No, someone brought a big cold sett—a two-foot bar sett or thereabouts, and a flogging hammer—Jesus—you should have seen Elipe. . . . 'Give me that bloody hammer,' he yelled—you'd a' thought he was on the stage at the Pompadour."

"Jesus! I can just picture old Elipe," declared Alonso, slapping his leg. "With one mighty swipe I'll set the prisoners free, you bet!"

"It was a mighty swipe, too! After one or two blows the holder dropped the bar as if it were hot, if he could have run he'd have gone miles."

"My brother . . ." whispered Valls and then became silent. The quiet Catalan seemed even more sadly quiet than usual, not even when Francis had pressed him to give some account of his recent investigations had he responded with enthusiasm. He seemed nervous and ill at ease.

"A blacksmith's striker took the hammer afterwards—and then an official came out and unlocked the gates. They smashed some of the inner doors right enough, which was rather daft because the warder flung the keys down as he bunked into the guardroom, and they made a tidy mess inside. . . ."

"Who's the *they*, chum?"

"Well, we, then; mattresses and blankets all over the place, I saw one ass trying to pull a drinking cup off a chain . . . but it was only excitement, there was nothing wicked in the temper of it. Then in the midst of the uproar someone proposed a commission of liberation, and it was accepted—that shows you they—we weren't far out of hand. The commission had got the keys of all the cells, it appears, and there was no need to do any more breaking. . . ."

"They let everyone out, eh?"

"Every man jack of them, politicals and all."

"Well, that's right," agreed Alonso reflectively. "No man knows the truth about the old justice . . . give the poor devils a chance. Anyway, every mother's son of us is a criminal in someone's eyes, I suppose, eh?"

"But it was good to see, boy. They went out quietly enough. Some of them who hadn't got friends or relations in the city were taken off by the commission—there was a

## LEAN MEN

collection for them, Peiró and some of the anarchist leaders managed that—lots of the prisoners were taken away by families who promised to give them shelter for a few days till they could get straight. I hope to God the Government doesn't start making any arrests, that's all, there'll be hell to pay if they do."

"The Federation's asking for an amnesty," announced Masera who had joined them. "They would."

"Well, why not?" countered Vilanova with heat. "Take the case of that couple they arrested for stitching up Soller."

"Oh, all right, just as you like," replied Masera sourly.

There was a shout of greeting at the door and Elípe entered accompanied by a hatless close-cropped man of determined expression. A swarm immediately gathered round them at the door and began firing questions at the couple, they were jostled into the kitchen where they heard shouts for coffee and sandwiches and cheers and Vivas.

"Elípe seems to be mighty popular these days," remarked Vilanova.

"Perhaps it's the chap he's got with him. . . . Who is he?" Masera asked.

"I don't know—I didn't catch a fair sight of him—one of the Centre I expect, we've lost one or two recently for selling Texido's pamphlet."

The conversation turned to the question of recognition of the new Government by foreign powers and the possibility of intervention.

"The afternoon papers say that Chile and Cuba have acknowledged Zamora," Vilanova stated.

"Guinea-pig land! What matters is France and Great Britain . . . look at the mess they made in Russia!" exclaimed Alonso. "Still—since the Government guarantees private property it should be all right—no, there won't be any intervention!"

"Of course not," Francis intervened. "A matter of days before the Republic is recognized. The English Government may even be pleased. La Vanguardia announces that the loan which the Dictatorship had intended to effect with American bankers has been called off and may be negotiated elsewhere—besides, there's no temper for intervention just now, a matter of formality, that's all."

## STORMS IN APRIL

There was a grating of chairs and a burst of greetings as the group from the kitchen emerged into the salon. Elípe was advancing towards them with a broad grin upon his face. It was clear that the overcoated man by his side was his protégé.

Valls made a gasping noise like an attack of niccoughs and with a violent but at once arrested start, upset his glass of coffee over the table.

"Heil!" exclaimed Francis. "What the . . ." Valls had stood up, his eyes showing anguished terror as they stared at the newcomer, his face twitching and his hands clenched upon the edge of the table. They turned their gaze upon Elípe's companion. He too was returning the stare with an expression of grim ferocity, leaning forward so that his new coat, too large for him, hung open, disclosing the oddments of dress he wore beneath. Slowly drawing his hands from his pockets—they were empty, Francis noted with relief—he advanced deliberately towards them, never shifting his gaze from the face of the terrified Catalan who stood goggling over the table. The nearby tables, sensing the tension, grew silent and watched the two men.

The stranger seemed to be deliberating upon something, he slackened his pace and returned his hands to his pockets and then withdrew them with a slowness that placed them in unbearable suspense. He advanced to the circle of chairs and stared into Valls's face. . . . The close-cropped hair and the haggard lines of his face spoke of suffering of a kind they recognized: hate seemed to burn in his intent eyes.

"So . . ." he whispered to himself. "My little brother. . ."

The paralysed man's voice broke ridiculously in his throat, he made a sudden movement with his hands as if desperately trying to break a spell. His lips moved and again the queer noise issued from his mouth. Suddenly, screeching shrilly, he staggered back a pace and the word "Brother" broke from his lips, almost without muscular articulation.

Neither of them spoke, the silence was intolerable. The spectacle of Valls's panic was trying their nerves. "Who are you?" Vilanova at last blurted at the newcomer.

"My name is Camps." The ferocity momentarily faded from the man's regard, he sat down wearily and rested his head upon his hand.

"You say you are Valls's brother?" Vilanova was incredulous.



## LEAN MEN

"That man's name is Gerard Campa." There was a grinding emphasis of hate in the reply.

Gerard suddenly quivered and shuffled his feet; the brother stiffened instantaneously as the terrified man sprang away from the table, lunged into the gangway between the tables and dashed towards the door. The visitor sprang to his feet and without a word raced in pursuit. Elipe made a futile grab at him as he passed.

At the top of the stone staircase Gerard seemed to slip sideways, almost recovered his balance and then toppled forward and slid down the first bend of the stairs head foremost and lay in a crumpled heap. The Murcian's circle, with the exception of Masera had hurried after the brothers, and, stepping over the prostrate man, Alonso turned savagely upon the brother.

"Say—what the hell's the game! If you want a dose of plugging . . ." he did not finish the threat, the sad weariness had returned to the man's face.

"All right," murmured the brother, "all right chum . . . he's bleeding. . . ."

They lifted Gerard and carried him up the steps into the library and laid him upon the floor. The elder brother, for so he appeared, stood alone in the corner near the door, as if ignoring the group in the centre. Elipe returned with water and a towel from the kitchen and slammed the door behind to cut short the curious attentions and advice of those in the corridor. At the end of five minutes Gerard opened his eyes, in their first glance the look of terror once more leapt into them as if his mind were clamped in a vice of anguish. "My brother," he whispered.

They seated him in the arm-chair they had provided for the library registrar and stood wondering what they could do. Neither of the brothers spoke, it seemed as if some unbreakable spell of dumbness, some joint fear of a taboo or a memory too awful for words repelled them from infringing upon its secrecy. They were all mystified by the occurrence. Gerard's incessant belauding of his brother's capacity for everything had aroused their derision repeatedly, and now in the presence of that brother he might have been facing death or torture.

Gerard's condition was indeed pitiable; they had had no experience of such behaviour. He kept lowering his whole

## STORMS IN APRIL

body as if a great weight were pressing him down; the trick of hanging his head he had always had, he would now have sunk to the floor repeatedly had they not sustained him. It was not weakness that dragged him down, his muscles were taut, he forced himself down. It seemed to Francis as if this behaviour were like some monstrous enlargement or extension of that hanging of his head which he had noticed Gerard only indulged in when alone or unengaged in conversation, or when his presence was ignored for any consecutive period. And then with a flash of understanding . . . followed by instantaneous doubt, Francis felt some kindred experience that offered explanation. Gerard was passing through some tremendous mental storm, it was plain to see, the recurring fits of trembling and shrinking, and the turning aside of his head were symptoms too unnervingly intense to have their genuineness called in question.

Francis went over to the older brother and shook him by the shoulder.

"What's he done? . . ." he spoke roughly. "What's he done to you? Can't you see what you're doing to him?"

The newcomer shook the hand from his shoulder.

"Three years," he muttered, and then with a grimace he suddenly confronted Gerard and shouted wildly: "Three years . . . three years . . . three years! Look at me!" He dashed back the sleeve of his overcoat, beneath the black hair of his forearm were the livid sores and red weals of some loathsome skin disease. "Three years in dungeons . . . scurried to the bone! While you go free—you put me there—to be scurried to death!"

The accusation broke Gerard's paralysis of speech.

"I didn't . . . I swear I didn't—I did all I could—I did all I could." He beat his hands together and then began to tap his chest, not violently, with the front of his right fist, his eyes shut and his head tilted backwards.

"I did all I could . . . O Jesu, Jesu," he whispered. The right hand continued ceaselessly to tap his breast with the same regularity and lack of violence so out of harmony with the abandon of previous gestures. Elise broke the silence by moving the bowl aside with his foot; the sound grated upon their nerves. Charing struggled to find some clue to Gerard's distress in his behaviour. He still maintained silence though

## LEAN MEN

his lips were moving, his head was still flung back, while that hand quietly tapped a monotonous tattoo upon his breast. Alonso started violently and turned his face to Charing. "Francis," he said quietly and lifting his hand imitated the younger brother's motion: "Peccavi." In an instant Francis understood, the act was probably being motivated by some hidden memory of a piece of the ceremonial of the Mass, the priest's confession "Peccavi"—"I have sinned." He nodded emphatically at Alonso and motioning Vilanova and Elipe to watch over Gerard beckoned the Murcian to his side. "Make this fellow speak," whispered Alonso; "that's what it is—he's wronged him, God knows how, but he'll come to serious harm if he continues like that for long."

"Yes—but how to make him speak," replied Francis, gazing at the stranger, whose distress seemed little less than that of Gerard. "Think what he's been through, a life sentence, released suddenly and without warning, from the Model I expect—who knows what disease he's got . . . or what has happened to him in that three years . . . that'll be the time he's served."

"But he *must* talk—he must forgive Gerard."

"No—I don't think it's that—what it is hell only knows." Francis shook his head and then went on. "He said 'I did all I could'; in his present state that's likely to be the truth, yet I think you're right about that beating . . . it's beyond me." They looked at Gerard. Elipe had pinioned the beating hand. The sick man's eyes were open, he was staring at his brother, the name "Pere" burst from his lips.

"Speak to him man," urged Francis, "can't you see he's suffering, he'll lose his reason, Pere! Speak to him."

The elder brother approached the chair.

"Why did you let them do it?" he demanded fiercely. "You let them sentence me . . . you let the foreman get away . . . they planted that stuff on me . . . you know they planted that stuff on me. A life sentence, a life sentence for planted explosives. . . ."

To Francis it sounded fantastically like something he had lived through before, it must be some novel he had read, or memory of a film.

"Pere—Pere!" Gerard had shut his eyes and was writhing in the chair. "I didn't. . . ."

## STORMS IN APRIL

"You should have dragged him to the court . . . fetched the others, they would have helped you fetch him . . . They convicted me . . . a life sentence." Pere was speaking in rapid thrusts, with no softness or hint of forgiveness in his voice, he would have laid hands on his brother if they had not restrained him.

"Take your hands off," he shouted. "If that . . . snake . . . if he had stood by me. . . . Oh, my God . . . do you know what prison is like, do you know what goes on up there in Montjuich? Starvation—scurvy till your teeth fall out, till your sight goes, till you're a mass of stinking sores, till you can't lie or sit . . . and the doctors—no, they don't laugh at you, they tell you they could cure you but they aren't allowed—and the beatings—do you know what brine on your back is like? Do you know how a bayonet through your foot hurts?"

Pere half stooped as if to remove his shoe and then straightened up again.

"Marched from prison to prison across Spain in the middle of summer, on foot—with your guards on horseback—twenty miles a day—handcuffed—not a piece of bread for six hours—starving—you drink in the morning—nothing all day and the steppe like a furnace—the hot wind blowing—dust—my God, do you know what it's like? You drink so much you make yourself sick—and then because you mayn't stop—you make water and empty yourself in your trousers—day after day till your skin peels off and you stink—and if you lift your head, a curse—or a blow—and that's not all! Oh Jesus, Jesus! . . . do you know what it is to have your privates whipped—whipped with switches because you won't sing on someone . . . not even your manhood can they leave alone . . . for losing a strike and having stuff planted on you. . . ." The frenzied man wrenched one arm loose and pointed into his brother's face. "You deserted me!" he screamed.

"Pere—I didn't desert," moaned Gerard rising from the seat—tears were streaming down his face: "I'll tell you—let me tell you, brother, listen to me. . . ." He began to speak as if to himself. "He was coming . . . he was coming to the court . . . he said you had stolen the explosives . . . he was coming for the Crown case . . . Pere, Pere, do you hear me . . . he was coming for the bosses' case. . . . It was up there . . . at the old shaft house . . . across the valley . . . where I

## LEAN MEN

found him afterwards . . . in the whitewashed room—with the big wheel. Pere! Three years—it's three years and I've never told anyone—never been able to get away from it . . . never been able . . . never told anyone. . . . Oh, my brother, my brother I didn't desert you . . . *I shot him . . . killed him. . . .*" Gerard flung himself before his brother, his head fell with a thud against Pere's knees. "Pere . . . down the shaft. . . ." They could barely hear the words as the voice faded away.

A moment of silence passed and then stooping over his brother Pere struggled to lift him to his feet. Alonso and Elipe leaned forward and aided him.

"Gerard . . . my little brother," whispered Pere and kissed him upon the forehead. Alonso turned his back on them suddenly and moved away, his shoulders shaking.

After a while Gerard began to rave again . . . his temperature rose to a fever heat and it was all they could do to hold him still. Pere continued to plead with him for forgiveness, beseeching him to be calm, pouring out protestations of love. Nothing availed. Then Alonso gave his keys to Texido and told them to take Gerard to his room while he fetched a doctor. Between them they carried him out of the Centre and through the darkened streets.

The newsboys were crying out that the General Strike had been called off. The apolitical anarchists had responded to the appeal addressed to them by the Civil Governor. A strike declared in the interests of the anarchist revolution had been abandoned in order not to prejudice a republic for whose establishment they had refused their votes. To make amends to principle Angel Pestaña had refused a portfolio in the Catalan Government.

It was not until the doctor had left Gerard, having doubtfully administered a febrifuge, that recollection seemed to explode in Charing's memory. The mine shaft and the explosives and the trial fell into significant contexts. He beckoned Pere and Alonso out on to the landing and explained to the former that his sister, Teresa, La Roja de Figols was an associate of the Centre. Anxiety and joy battled in the miner's consciousness. After a while he expressed eagerness to meet his sister. Alonso showed greatly more interest and surprise than Pere.

"She is still in Mallorca," continued Francis, "with Maris-

## STORMS IN APRIL

cal's sister. I propose we send for her at once—no! we'll fetch her. She ought to be able to look after Gerard. Fetch Mariscal too, he'll be a better doctor. What's the time I wonder." Francis looked at his watch. "Slip your clothes on Alonso, the boat goes at 9.15. I have enough money with me and I'll scribble the address while you're changing. I'll go for Mariscal."

"No, boy. That's the hammer right enough, but I'd rather you go. You see—well, I've been writing to her and I think she'd rather you came for her."

"Oh? Why?"

"I don't know, she's never replied to me, you see. I'd rather you go."

"Very well," assented Francis, "there's no time to get over to Rafael's place, lend me a coat and muffler; get out and buy some food for me and then be at the Customs House. By the way . . ." he hesitated a moment.

"Yes . . . you'll be back in two days?"

"Yes, and Tesh is to be . . ."

"Sure," interposed Alonso, "Tesh is in charge till you're back." Alonso's understanding of his last remark gave Francis pleasure as he hastened to the booking-office. Throughout the Centre's existence, despite the spontaneously hardening discipline and ever-growing activity of the society, never had any authority been officially attributed to him. He had incessantly striven to avoid the complication, his job was not to lead but to prepare the ground for a leader who might spring from among the Spanish workers themselves, yet for the time being he was compelled to exercise control. Alonso's reply showed that he thoroughly understood his position.

As the white *Jaime I* sirened her way out of the great port he stood at the stern, gazing at the million lights of the turbulent city. This was all wrong from the standpoint of strict duty; for a revolutionary to desert his post during such days was to commit crime. And yet, the Centre, now some six hundred strong, with factions and groups in every industry, had been built up on a foundation of unprofessional humanism. He would be back in Barcelona in two days' time, Texido could be relied upon to follow the correct line until his return.

The peace of the slow-heaving sea, shining dimly in the Mediterranean night, would provide him with the respite of

## LEAN MEN

calm he needed. It was good to stand aside a moment from the tragedy of life, there was so much to do, to struggle against within and without that the mind had grown tired and unsteady in its judgment. It seemed to him as they turned the break-water that the shutting out of the city was like closing a door upon some vast music of sorrow. They were moving out towards peace, towards purity and innocence, and it filled him with the same quiet joy that he experienced in those rare moments of licence when he permitted himself to think of what life would eventually be like in a society from which poverty, violence, the ceaseless battle of classes and war had been eliminated, where the spirit might drink as deeply as it wished of knowledge, of art, of music and all things lovely that haunt the tormented spirit of man.

## CHAPTER XX

### DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

If the fantastic project were to be put to the test, no longer was delay possible ; at five of the afternoon she would have to go to the Norte Station to meet Catarina, returning from Torrellas, and already the entire morning had passed in anxious decision. In what strange incursion of daring the idea had been conceived Señora Trepát herself did not know. For three days she had lived in a sweet agony of speculation comparable to that of a first tryst.

Perhaps it was the opportunity of her servant's absence that gave her resolution. Catarina would be certain to disapprove ; through all her years of service at the church of Saints Pastor and Just the Torrellana had never uttered one word in approval of her labours. Not that her servant's catholicism was in doubt ; Catarina attended mass with Doña Agata every Sunday morning at eight and upon the cardinal feasts she also accompanied her to the High Mass. Doña Agata was sure that Catarina would have gone to High Mass every Sunday had it not been necessary to prepare the midday meal for Don Gumersind. Her servant also said her beads every evening after the Angelus had boomed from the Cathedral ; nothing deterred her, even if she had to watch the cauldron while reciting it or keep an advisory guard over her mistress plucking and cleaning a chicken or a duck. Sometimes she would even say it twice, certainly on days when the menu contained veal. It was a rule of her native town that for a soft-boiled egg one said five Paternosters and ten for a hard-boiled, though some claimed that a creed, a Paternoster and an Ave repeated twice with the invocation of Our Lady of the Cloisters of Torrellas served better. This latter rule found no favour with Catarina, for she knew that its sponsors had ulterior motives, the forty days' indulgence accorded the recitation rather than strictly



## LEAN MEN

culinary ones. Catarina did not dispute another doctrine to the effect that for omelettes no formula was good, one had to watch them zealously, like children, nor yet another, that for one pound of veal a short rosary said devoutly gave perfectly heavenly results.

Catarina's orthodoxy could not be questioned, nevertheless Doña Agata was so fearful of confiding in her that she had resolved to make her venture before she should return. If it failed then the servant need never know, if on the contrary her wildest hopes became reality the glory of it would be her sufficient buttress against opposition.

These days had been difficult enough without this nerve-destroying preoccupation. In all the thirty odd years of her service Catarina had never once asked for leave to visit her home town even though she had made the place so familiar to Don Gumersind and the family that they had recognized its every feature upon the occasion of their visit. The servant had also twice paid her only sister's fare to Barcelona during that period so that the ties of family might not be too much loosened. And then suddenly she had put the evening paper down and without overture asked Don Gumersind for leave to visit Torrellas. The master smith had been so astonished that he had gasped, "Why yes, woman," before he had had time to consider how best to refuse, and straightway Catarina had stumped up the stairs to her room, forgetting even to lay down the paper. Upon her descent she had announced curtly that she had packed and that she would be taking the early train next morning. Doña Agata had given a little cry of despair but Catarina had taken no notice of her. Trepat's rage had been forced to find another outlet.

"Where's the paper, woman; is it coming to this, that I mayn't read the evening edition in my own home?" he had exclaimed with some preservation of pomp.

"Me Cass'm Deu," Catarina had protested not very sincerely; she always preferred to make use of the falsified verb rather than effect Don Serafino's substitution, "if I haven't packed it right in the middle of my box, no, my basket."

"Animal!" bawled Don Gumersind. "Do you mean to stand there and tell me that you've appropriated my paper, *walked off with it*! Would you like to borrow my spectacles as well, madam? Speak, woman, answer me . . . what the

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

devil do I care whether it's your box or your basket, the top or the bottom or the confounded middle, do you think I don't know you wouldn't stick it in your bonnet, animal! donkey!"

"But Gumersind! . . ."

"Be quiet Agata . . . it's a conspiracy, I suppose. . . ."

"Ca! home!" So rarely did the servant use the familiar Catalan ablative that her explosion had effectively cut short Trepát's tirade. "I've another in my room, unpacked."

And she had at once fetched it. It was not the paper of custom, and the master smith had looked doubtfully at the date of the copy of *El Noticiero* which she had laid upon the table, together with Don Gumersind's spectacles, which she had rather pointedly handled, thought everyone. The copy had borne the current date and they had fallen to puzzling over this unexpected possession of a newspaper. The gossip of the fountain was sufficient for Catarina as a rule, a rule that had extended over thirty years, for besides being not less well-informed than the newspapers, its stream was not muddied by censorship at the fountainhead. It seemed almost as if Catarina had seen something in the paper she did not wish them to read.

She had not shown much interest in the departure of Alfonso, and had only snorted mildly when the masses of Madrid, angered by the Government's failure to deal at once with the Church, had caused seven or eight of the one hundred and seventy convents in Madrid to be burnt. Nor had she been impressed by Guillermo's suddenly acquired dignity; what a city councillor had said about the state of the city's finances had been immediately capped by her reference to a remark of a butcher-councillor of her town apropos the quantity of bad money received in tender for rates.

This purchase of a newspaper, therefore, had been sufficiently strange to subdue Don Gumersind for the rest of the evening. He had picked up the paper and had searched through its unfamiliar sheets, irritably, they could see, and had then flung it down without remark.

It was nearly one o'clock and Don Gumersind would arrive at any minute, if he were coming. Señora Trepát had been very worried about her husband of late, his usually competent appetite seemed to have disappeared, he ate irregularly and listlessly, even when they had procured fresh trout for him, the

## LEAN MEN

finest the streams of the Catalan Pyrenees could produce. Oftentimes he would not return for the midday meal at all. He had rented the smithy of a bankrupt master craftsman in a street upon the other side of Casco Viejo, the old city, in charge of which he had placed his second hand, recently married. A large part of the Torrellas scheme was being executed at this second forge and to it Don Gumersind every morning made his way. When he did not return for lunch he would excuse himself by saying that he had eaten at a restaurant. She had surmised that the contract was really too large for one smithy and that the excessive labour was undermining her husband's health.

Guillermo mounted the staircase and entering the room flung his satchel upon a chair.

"Hullo, mother," he called into the kitchen. "Oh, by the way, father won't be coming home for lunch."

"Have you seen him, Guillermo? I thought he'd gone to the smithy."

"So he said—he was up at the Generalitat when I left, talking to one of the provincial secretaries. He told me to send Enrique over to the other forge as he would need his help in the afternoon."

"Good gracious, my boy . . . but Guillermo, Enrique went over this morning to see your father."

"This morning! But father said he'd just left the forge for a few minutes. . . ."

Mother and son lapsed into silence. They both knew that the master of the house not infrequently practised economies with the truth, but it was not proper for them openly to join in drawing the natural deductions from his remarks to his son.

"Oh well—what's there for lunch, mother? Politics makes me hungry. Say, what do you think the Council are going to do? It's a unanimous decision, or nearly."

"Going to do?" faltered Doña Agata.

"Yes. We've decided to ask the Madrid Government to grant us the fortress of Montjuich as a public memorial of the—as a park or recreation ground."

"Oh well, I suppose you know best, son," Señora Trepas said a little mournfully and wiped her hands upon a duster before sitting down.

"There's soup, Guillermo, and rice with molluscs and

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

prawns and some grilled tongue, but what are you doing to do with the prisoners? I thought the Model was destroyed."

"Destroyed, good lord, no. Wine please, mother. Well we shan't need Montjuich any more, unless it's for naughty priests, like the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo," Guillermo said in a tone of gentle bantering, "or those wicked old plotters at St. Pastor and St. Just, eh? But seriously, mother, the people will learn how to behave pretty soon now that we've obtained freedom."

"But they burned a lot more churches at Málaga yesterday."

"Fancy Doña Desposoris in a dungeon," continued the son, ignoring his mother's observation, "and Doña Gertrudis. I'll bet they'd find out some scandal about their warder inside a week, eh? Goes to bed with his trousers on, my dear Doña Desposoris, they say he sometimes wears his jacket and overcoat too. Can't you see Gertrudis, mother?" Guillermo pressed his lips together and glared at Señora Trepát. "No, socks," he concluded in imitation of Doña Desposoris's pontifical correction.

Doña Agata sighed. "And they burned the bishop's palace at Málaga, too."

"Naughty men, and was the bishop inside?"

"Guillermo! Of course not, how could you say such things!"

"Oh, what's all the fuss about, dear, lots of people have been burnt before now, haven't they?"

"Yes, I know—don't start that again," said Doña Agata hastily. "Of course . . . I hope you are right, Guillermo, but things do seem terrible, look what a fright your father and I had. . . ."

"Yes, I know, but there you see a case in point. The truth about the May Day trouble is beginning to come out."

"The truth—I thought—but Guillermo, your father himself took me to see the bullet marks on the City Hall door, I saw them with my own eyes."

"Of course, dear, what I meant was this. You know that the shooting was supposed to have begun inside the City Hall when the procession arrived from the Plaza de Catalunya."

"Yes . . . and outside as well."

"Well now, Mother—some of those who fired from the Hall, besides some who replied from outside, have been arrested."

## LEAN MEN

"So they ought—that's what I meant about Montjuich. Where will you put them if you're going to make it a . . . what did you say, a zoo or something, wasn't it?"

"If I had my way I'd . . ." Guillermo controlled himself, he really enjoyed these new disputes with his mother, he could not remember her ever taking any interest in the large political events before the change of government. He must exercise moderation in his method of debate, and then perhaps his mother might broaden her outlook. She had been very sweet about his councillorship, whereas Don Gumersind, a right republican, had raved about the interference with the work of the smithy.

"It doesn't matter about that yet—but it appears that all of the arrested men, with a few exceptions, formerly belonged to the old free syndicates—the Catholic unions. It is thought that it was just an attempt to stir up trouble, organized by the monarchists."

"Oh, but how could you think that? The clergy wouldn't allow it."

"So they have their fingers in things, then, mother!" retorted the son with mock malice. "Well, what were the catholic union gunmen doing in an anarchist procession? Tell me that. They were seen hanging about in the porch before the procession arrived, too; no one suspected what they were going to do or they'd have been arrested, you bet. I'm sorry, dear, if it hurts you, but you must face facts."

"So must you, Guillermo." Doña Agata mustered a little flare of resistance despite the fact that it was necessary to be very careful with Guillermo now that he was a councillor. She could not bear the thought that her son should be involved in even a collective assault upon the privileges of the church, unique instrument of salvation. There could be no plea of invincible ignorance for a former communicant. Besides her advice had been that it would be better not to provoke even the most junior member of the council to anti-clerical fervour. The church, with its divine pilot at the helm, would weather any storm the elements of revolution might raise, but it was, so to speak, none the less desirable that the good ship should arrive in port complete with all its masts, spare sails and chandlery, besides a fairly large complement of crew, not to speak of passengers.

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

"You can't deny there's shooting and hold-ups all over the city, and strikes."

"Of course not, but that's nothing new. The Dictatorship was removed a little suddenly, that's all. And strikes, well, I see no harm in that. We've had strikes below, ourselves. Conditions are bad enough in the city. It's just impatience, dear, they'll soon get over all that. Better education will work wonders in a few years time. Look at England, France, Germany, Denmark, the rest of Europe. More education means more civilization, mother."

"Well, schools are all right, I suppose—but still, they say there are no anarchists in all those countries," Doña Agata added inconclusively, "or there might be shooting. I expect they've got prisons, though."

Guillermo laughed, and as he passed his mother gave her a pat upon the pads from which she produced her pencilled halo upon occasion. He would not stay for coffee, he would be taking it at the office in the City Hall, he said as he hurried out of Trepat House.

Doña Agata began once more the effort of making up her mind about her daring plan. It seemed like launching herself upon a billowing ocean of distress even to consider the matter.

To her surprise, no sooner had she set out for the Cathedral, which she did about a quarter to four, than a large part of her anxiety disappeared. She even sailed with a smile through the square of St. Just, without a glance, or with no more than a little glance, in the direction of the church.

She dared not think of failure, success would have such signal consequences that it *must* be achieved. A fortnight ago Señora Fuster had respectfully intimated that the sewing work had come to an end, at least, the *special* work had, and after one more agonizing visit for the sake of appearances, Doña Agata had been obliged to announce her desire to return to her normal duties at St. Just. She had, however, made no attempt to return to the guild and had astonished Catarina on the following Sunday by dragging her to the Cathedral to hear mass. "It's three times as far!" the servant had expostulated. "It's across Jaime I, Señora, what possesses you?" To cross the main thoroughfare when a church lay upon this side was preposterous. But Doña Agata had persisted and they had chosen one of the many masses being celebrated in the cathedral.

## LEAN MEN

Catarina had had her revenge, the mass had been a poor one, the priest had been unshaven though it was a Sunday and had rumbled and yawned his way through the office. He seemed angry at their presence in the chapel, too, and the serving boy had scowled at them. Don Serafino was not possessed of a seraphic voice but at least he said mass reverently and his piety was not to be doubted.

But return to St. Just would be too humiliating, and carefully Señora Trepas had found out at which altar and at what hour Canon Faixal customarily officiated and had taken her place in the chapel. As she turned into Paradise Lane she hoped the canon would recognize her; it would be awful to approach that dignity and be rebuffed without even explaining her request. She had listened carefully to the conversation at Señora Fuster's and she was quite sure that in Canon Faixal she was approaching the right authority.

She entered the Cathedral by the cloister entrance in See Street, preferring the long way round for three reasons. First, she liked the cloisters; secondly, by going that way she would pass an example of her husband's work, a balcony of great beauty; and also, she confessed to herself when deception was no longer possible, she had suddenly been smitten with terrible fear as she had approached the apsidal end of the Cathedral, within which the organ was buzzing angrily. In the cloister a large number of planks had been stacked, trestles and ladders stood against the chapel grille, a clatter of buckets and the subdued shouting of orders was arousing the capitoline geese to clamour.

Usually Señora Trepas liked to halt by the geese tank with its brimming green water and little pieces of down scudding slowly over its satin surface. She rarely came to the cloister without a few titbits for the birds, for whom she had a special affection. City bred, Doña Agata did not know the correct formula for the attraction of geese, but almost without thinking she had invented her own formula. "Come, happy ones, come, happy ones," she would croon through the cloister rail and the lazy birds would glide over to her ungloved hand for the morsel. Or if the birds were preening themselves on the stone flags beside the tank, she would go round to the fountain by the baptismal registry and talk to them from its gate. She knew the geese would never so much disturb themselves as to

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

waddle over to the cloister rails. She loved to hear their sudden uproar go ringing through the cloisters, or, when the cathedral door was open, through the dark immensity of the nave. At these times she would listen to the last echo of goose as it winged about the hidden caverns of the roof. The geese seemed to have their own agreed signal for outbursts. The cloister might be empty save for sleepy beggars or some ragged workman partaking of his lunch of bread, omelette and sour wine, and an August noon be buzzing monotonously beneath the palms in the centre. There might be nothing to disturb their endless preening when suddenly with a clap of wings they would desperately stretch their necks as if they had been caught in some furious hurricane and their reedy clamour would startle the silence with its unanimity. At other times the cloister might be noisy with all goose-provoking activities, workmen might be sitting on the chapel steps reading the afternoon papers, children decorously playing about the door, beggars intoning, gesticulating bands of elder clergy disputing the day's events and pale reverent recently-ordained youths discoursing in vehement undertones; and yet the geese would remain asleep with their heads under their wings. Sometimes it would seem very much as if some remark in the far corner by Santa Lucia needed corroboration, then the geese corroborated; or a passing affirmation needed denial, the geese might then crane their necks at the scandalous human and hiss like the very incarnation of indignant vituperation.

The original significance of the geese she did not know, yet Señora Trepát loved her happy ones and most of all she loved their sudden breaking of the silence. The silence of the Cathedral was peaceful, holy, but a little too awful, like the Holy Ghost; it seemed barely Christian, as if a great mysterious god of the Ninevites or an invisible Moloch might dwell within the vaulted darkness. It was all so different from the confined familiarity of St. Pastor and St. Just, with its friendly brown saints.

Sometimes when the Cathedral had been nearly empty, towards dark, she had felt a shuddering fear at the eerie immensity around her. At such times the gabbling of the geese outside was more than an amusing disturbance of the silence; it warmed her heart with sudden appreciation of the world, of her friends and acquaintances, faintly thrilling her with



## LEAN MEN

charitable feelings which immediately made her happy, so that the presence of the Ninevitish god seemed to fade away and the Cathedral became the home of Christ and his infinitely yearning mother once more.

Señora Trepát lingered a moment at the tank and then went on to the baptismal registry opposite the fountain. It was a beautiful thought of the church to place a fountain near one of the cloister doors. It invited friend and foe alike to quench their thirst, it was symbolic of the soul's anxiety and of the church's gracious ministration in this parched desert of life, where stones spring from the ground and thorns only grow, upon which there are no fruits, where is no refreshment save that which the church mercifully tenders in her loving hands. The water of life, beloved children—but she had thought all this before the preacher had put it into her head, and had drunk of its cold water ; it was a fountain to which she might go without censure. It was pleasant and somehow significant in an exemplary way that its waters should also replenish the tank of the humble geese. She had indeed expected the preacher to say so, but he had gone on to an exposition of the sacramental system instead.

The singing within the Cathedral had already finished. The choir boys came running out and dashed at once to the fountain : Doña Agata noticed how, when they opened the tap to drink, the slender pencil of water which spurted from its mossy top sank down and shot up again only when they turned off the tap. She was pleased with her discovery, and then suddenly terrified as the first knot of clergy rustled by. The registrar sallied from his office with an esparto broom and chased the splashing choir boys away, but the distraction only increased her agitation.

Many more clergy, some of them dignitaries, swept by, and then at last Canon Faixal. She knew it was Canon Faixal, although she could not see his face. Everyone at Señora Fuster's had praised the canon's management of his gown and skirt. The canon indeed strode along with a splendid swaying and rustling of silk and wool that supported his natural and ecclesiastical dignity with all the resources of art. She knew Don Faixal's habit of circumnavigating the cloisters once or twice before going out through the door nearest to the Cathedral exit, and so she waited at the fountain for him to return.

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

He had turned the corner ; Doña Agata's mouth was dry, too dry for speech. She glanced desperately at the trickling fountain ; but no, impossible, besides, the canon was bearing down upon her. She stepped forward and was about to say "Reverend Father," when he stopped, and looking round at the registry, extended his hand to her, palm downwards. She stooped and dutifully kissed the ring upon his finger, whereupon, whispering a rapid benediction, the canon gathered his skirts in his hand and with an inclination of his head, strode on round the cloister once more.

Doña Agata's heart fluttered wildly, as panic and mortification warred in her breast. She thought suddenly of Catarina her defender and longed for her presence even though she might disapprove of all this. She could see that the canon had continued his round of the cloister and would be passing her once more. Whether to flee at once or to brave the ignominy of rebuff once more she could not decide. Nevertheless, unconsciously obeying the tauromachian rule of approaching the enemy, she moved towards the corner round which Canon Faixal would sweep.

As she approached it the gardener at work upon the grass plot approached the railings and flung a loose bundle of twigs in front of her. She stepped aside and collided with Don Faixal.

"Ah, good afternoon, Señora," beamed the canon, "most careless of the gardener, indeed."

"Reverend Father," she managed, "I wished to speak with you."

"Ah, you wished to speak with me." The ecclesiastic's beam relaxed a little. "Well, how may I assist you, my daughter?"

"I wondered—I thought perhaps, your reverence, that it might be possible—I mean. . . ." Oh, how could she express herself, it seemed impossible bluntly to address her request to the canon.

"Yes? Let us see, now," said the canon in a far-away tone. "H'm, I think it would be better if we continued our walk, Señora, would it not?"

How kind and helpful the canon was, Doña Agata was filled with gratitude.

As they passed the fountain a woman with a basket stepped

## LEAN MEN

out of their way. She even noticed how the canon's arm automatically extended itself a little way as they passed on, nevertheless she could not find words with which to open her suit. The geese clamoured at them as they strolled by, and Don Faixal turned to them and snapping his fingers, made a noise suggestive of encouragement. How nice of the canon, she thought, so thoroughly human. She approached the railing and murmured to the birds abstractedly.

"What is that you say, Señora? Excuse my question, I beg you, I thought I heard you call them—let us see now?"

"I always call them 'happy ones,'" replied Doña Agata in confusion.

"Ah! happy ones, yes, yes, a very good name. It is indeed a happy existence they lead. Do you know, Señora, I was remarking only the other week, yes, the other week, to my friend the Master of the Fabric, how pleasant it would be to be . . . that is to say, well, do you not think it must be very peaceful to pass one's time here in the cloister?" There was a note of wistfulness in the canon's speech.

"Yes—that is why I call them 'happy ones' . . . I think," agreed Señora Trepát with a sudden feeling of confidence and rare illumination.

"How very nice, how *very* nice! As a matter of fact, I believe they have names, though I never remember them. I think that one is the Emperor or perhaps it's the Cryer. I wonder whether the keeper is about. . . ." The canon looked about him vaguely.

"I . . . I think your reverence is mistaken," Doña Agata faltered, gazing at the bird with some culinary experience.

"Oh, very possibly, *very*, indeed *probably*," agreed the canon. "As a matter of fact *that one* bears a very distinguished name—perhaps I ought not to mention it but the truth is, Madam, that—well, the choir schoolboys named it after a certain dignitary—and I'm afraid, well the keeper of course should not encourage them—but there! Youth, my dear Madam, youth, you know! You have a request to make I believe, my daughter?" The canon continued to chuckle as he referred to her petition.

"Yes, father. I wondered if you could . . ."

"Ah! I am afraid, I *am* afraid that I must ask you to find

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

some other confessor, Señora, you will pardon me I am sure, most sure."

"I had been hoping, your reverence, that you would be able to find some use for my services . . . in the . . . in one of the care and maintenance guilds." There, it was said, Doña Agata glowed with relief, her fear seemed almost to have disappeared. Canon Faixal sighed.

"I see—a very different question, Madam. I need hardly say how comforting it is to see that the Church may still count upon the support of some of her children. These are difficult times, Señora, when many souls are running grave peril, *very—grave—peril* indeed," he shook his head solemnly.

"Yes, father." She did not really like his reference to very grave peril. "It is for that reason I came." The words seemed to speak themselves, Señora Trepát had had no intention of saying any such thing, it might not even be true.

"Of course, Señora, it is very gratifying indeed."

"You will pardon my request, your reverence, I have often heard my friend Señora Fuster speak of you."

"Señora Fuster, ah! A very excellent lady, Madam, so you are a friend of Señora Fuster?" It was curious that Señora Fuster had not approached him, then, he was thinking.

"I have recently been working with her sewing party, upon the Easter decorations, I—I worked the Paschal Lamb upon the banner, your reverence," continued Doña Agata hastily.

"Ah, yes, the Paschal Lamb, very devotional," replied the canon with more suddenness than promptitude, for he had been indulging in a very pleasant train of thought. Why should not this rather funny little lady's request be granted? Her very frankness was refreshing. The usual ceremonies would have been, perhaps, more flattering, but also much more tedious, and surely less . . . a sensation of delight had passed through Canon Faixal's friendly consciousness . . . and surely less Christian, he had thought. So many changes were occurring in the world outside. Why should not the wind of renovation stir gently within the Church? He had often been amused and sometimes a little angry at the palatine diplomacy that surrounded cathedral favours. Possibly even the geese had their unwitting tale of conspiracy, poor things. Perhaps the equal chances that ages ago the city had possessed Roman greatness and that a certain contemporary

## LEAN MEN

poulterer's niece was engaged to the son of the judge's widow had intersected and left within the cloisters that likeable old roysterer, the Cryer, just now gabbling furiously at the Bishop. Well, just now perhaps the senior ladies would be occupied with other thoughts, so much was happening in the world. It was only a very tiny pleasure to accede to this petition, but why should he not enjoy it? Paschal Lamb! What was she saying about a Paschal Lamb?

"You are often mentioned at Señora Fuster's, father, perhaps that is some excuse for my hindrance of your duties."

"I am? Ah yes—the ladies of the guilds permit none to live in immunity, is that not so?" Canon Faixal laughed courteously.

"Oh, no, your reverence. I assure you that you are most esteemed among the guild, most esteemed."

"How very nice of you to say so, how very nice." The canon gathered his skirts together with a magisterial gesture. "Let me see, perhaps we may be able to profit by your suggestion. I suppose, Madam, your family . . . I mean, we have just now a need for a strong young man, the master of the campanologists was speaking to me yesterday. Of course it is very probable that he will have some gentleman in mind, but still. . . ."

"I am afraid my sons . . . I think they are already engaged," faltered Señora Trepas with fresh mortification and a little sadness.

"Yes, yes, they would be," agreed the canon. "Well, perhaps something else will suggest itself."

They turned away and began to stroll towards See Street gate, each waiting for the other to speak.

"What splendid grilles these are," ventured Doña Agata at last.

"The chapel grilles? Ah yes, no doubt."

"The very purest early fourteenth-century work . . . so chaste . . . so just a use of round bar. . . ."

Maria Santissima, what an extraordinary little lady, thought Canon Faixal, early fourteenth-century work was it? He looked about him.

"And so uniform, Señora," They were uniform, why, indeed they were, he thought, glancing around the cloisters again.

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

"Yes, they have . . ."—what was it they have?—"such homogeneity of style, all fairly beaten out with the hand hammer."

The little lady did not look as if she had ever seen a hammer, what a curious corpus of knowledge!

"This one has little spires with . . ." Oh, what was the word for the ornaments?

"Ah, those crockets, little crocketed spires, yes how charming." He must point them out to the Master of the Fabric, casually, as his friend pointed out the features of a church he had already studied.

"Notice how they are set forward from the gates," continued Doña Agata gazing at the crockets as if they were something as rare as a cuckoo's nest.

"So they are, to be sure, Señora, this is most interesting—most interesting." It was. Canon Faixal did not remember having noticed before how beautiful the cloister iron was, even then he was not aware that it was perhaps the finest collection of early gothic smithing in Europe. How strange that this funny little person should be so conversant with these things.

As they arrived in front of the Cathedral door a party of workmen shuffled out bearing a gate of florid brasswork, which by its lightness appeared to be hollow. Its little iron-work has been profusely gilded. The whole was grimy and dustladen with long neglect.

"Dear me, how noisy they are," exclaimed the canon as the workmen dropped the piece upon a prepared floor of planks. "Let us go inside, Madam, they will have begun the restoration of the chapel, or rather, it can hardly be called a restoration." They entered the cathedral and continued their walk behind the high altar and round towards the north door. Acetylene lamps were burning upon the floor in one of the chapels, throwing strong and angular shadows on to the ceiling, from which two workmen, perched upon a trestled plank, were detaching a candelabra.

"Most insecure, very dangerous, I am sure," commented the canon as the plank dipped with the sudden increase of weight upon it. "We are having the chapel cleaned and placed at the service of the cult again. It has been used as—well, hardly as a lumber room, of course, but several articles

## LEAN MEN

have been kept there recently, things for which infrequent use only is dictated, as Lenten crosses. As they had been taken out, the Bishop, whom God preserve, has decided that the effort shall be made. By the way, Madam, you must pardon me, but I believe I have committed the offence, the unpardonable offence, of forgetting your name."

"Señora Trepát. My husband. . . ." Don Gumersind was a husband of whom to be proud, she felt loyally, but he was not reputed for piety, though of course, nothing could be charged against him.

"Señora Trepát—ah yes, of course! Let me see, I believe I have noticed some reference to your name recently, I wonder where it could have been?"

"Perhaps, your reverence, you are acquainted with the products of our house."

"Ye-e-s . . . may be," agreed the canon cautiously as if he were being asked to appraise a brand of soup pastes and macaroni.

"Trepát House Smithy—it has conquered not a little of fame in the world of art," added Señora Trepát, borrowing one of her husband's introductory humilities.

"Ah yes! Trepát House! How very distinguished!" exclaimed Canon Faixal. "Why, my friend the Master of the Fabric possesses a piece of your husband's work. A pair of fire dogs, to be precise. He is *most* enthusiastic about them!"

"We have done much important work for the Church, as for . . ." Doña Agata checked herself from pronouncing the conclusion of her husband's sentence, it would not do to say, "as for more liberal branches of society."

"Ah yes, of course, a very famous house indeed, I assure you the fact has not escaped me," continued the canon with evident respect. "Has not your husband recently undertaken a very notable scheme for a church somewhere in the diocese of Vich, I am sure I read an account of it somewhere."

"In *La Vanguardia*, your reverence, I expect. There was half a page upon it." The half-page, obscured by dust but securely pasted to a board, hung in the lower office. Another copy lay in Don Gumersind's drawer.

"In *La Vanguardia*, of course. You must have a very agreeable source of interest in the forge, Madam. Excuse me," he ejaculated through a sneeze.

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

"Good health, your reverence," exclaimed Señora Trepát, observing custom.

"Many thanks, yes, good health, with God's grace. It is the dust, however," Canon Faixal replied in a tone of anti-thesis, stopping and rubbing his finger on the rail from which the gate had been taken. As he slowly straightened up, the canon seemed to have forgotten the demonstrative finger covered with dust and was gazing into the wall of the chapel abstractedly.

"It's very dusty," ventured Doña Agata at last.

"Oh yes, yes." The canon appeared startled. "I'm afraid the chapel has been neglected somewhat. *Mater purissima!* I have it—do you think you would care to volunteer your services in the new guild, Señora Trepát? We shall have to make fresh demands upon the charity of the daughters of the Church I fear, for the care of this chapel, I mean."

It was unbelievable! The radiance of joy filled Doña Agata's mind, she could barely hear the canon's words as he remarked that he would be pleased to approve of her nomination.

"Your reverence," she gasped, "I am most grateful—most grateful."

"Not at all—it is the Church has cause to be grateful, for the devotion of its children. I am afraid you will find the work a little arduous at first, there is much to do, *very much*."

"Oh that won't matter," she hastened to reply, "I shall be happy, all the happier, father."

"How very fortunate! I am—er—rather afraid you will disapprove of these adornments—fittings," murmured Canon Faixal stooping and rubbing another finger along the rail. "You will have much more technical knowledge than I can hope to possess, Madam, but is not the case that this work is poor, inartistic?"

"I think so—yes, much better might be done," agreed Señora Trepát in a stupor of happiness.

"If I may venture the opinion, unqualified as I am to express it, brass is hardly suitable for such a purpose; would not Señor Trepát be of that opinion also, Madam?"

"Oh certainly, your reverence, I think Don Gumersind . . . I think he would consider brass a *disgrace* to the Cathedral."



## LEAN MEN

"A disgrace, y-e-e-s, I am glad to have expert confirmation of my venturesomeness," murmured the canon. "There is much that might be done to improve the chapel, don't you think so, Señora Trepát?"

"Oh yes, your reverence," exclaimed Doña Trepát, with conviction, she had been gazing at the altar, bare of linen, "I think we could probably rectify that."

"Ah! No doubt you could," concurred the canon upon a note of satisfaction, rubbing the dust from his finger. "Then you would be willing to lend your services to the new guild, may I take it?"

"Oh most willingly, your reverence, I should be delighted!"

"Perhaps I might even ask you to organize a guild, to find a few volunteers among your friends by way of beginning, or is that too much?"

"Oh no," gasped Doña Agata before she had had time to consider the difficulties. "I should be delighted, I think—I think you could safely entrust the house. . . ." Once again Don Gumersind seemed to be at her elbow with one of his time-honoured phrases. "I mean I could—yes, father. . . ." This sudden ascent to glory was almost terrifying, she had once or twice wondered what Elijah's impressions had been as the chariot, of fire soared upwards. It must be unnerving to have to go to heaven in a circus car, and though Don Serafino's sermon upon the historic miracle seemed even further off than a memory at the moment, she vaguely compared herself to the prophet. Indeed she felt quite dizzy.

"Then you will permit me to express my cordial thanks for your proffer of help, will you not, Señora? We shall put the usual announcements in the Cathedral magazine, so perhaps you will let me have a few particulars concerning yourself and your husband, whom we shall always be *very* pleased to see, Madam, though that barely needs saying. Oh, by the way, I had asked Sister Inocencia of Las Salesas to undertake a little work in the chapel to-morrow morning, perhaps—the reredos is to be regilded. It will need a little dusting first, that's all."

"Certainly, father. I will bring my servant with me to-morrow morning."

"Ah! Then I will introduce you to the senior verger before you leave, he will be able to apportion you a locker,

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

I expect. To save you the labour of carrying things to and fro, of course. Perhaps you would also call at Las Salesas and tell the doorkeeper that Sister Inocencia need not visit the Cathedral to-morrow." Señora Trepát was on the point of eagerly assenting when Canon Faixal continued: "Dear me, I'm afraid it is too late to call at Las Salesas. Perhaps you would oblige me personally by calling her on the telephone—you have a telephone, of course. Now let us visit the verger and the reverend father sacristan as well."

To walk about the Cathedral instinct with office and in the company of Canon Faixal was a joy she would have continued indefinitely, but, the introductions made, the canon presented the correct courtesies and withdrew, leaving her to the less satisfactory attention of the verger. Kings might have jesters at their courts to remind them of their common flesh, but Doña Agata vaguely wondered why the Almighty invariably installed in his holy temples such incarnate jibes at his Divine Mystery as was the average verger. This one was not even impressed by Canon Faixal, and towards her he exhibited not even a perfunctory deference.

Señora Trepát went out into the cloister, there to bask in the risen sun of achieved ambition. The cloister was full of eagerly whispering clergy, the more important upon the grass plot beneath the palm, a few religiously walking up and down in front of the registry, and large bands of secular clergy, especially recent ordinands, pale-faced, solemn and earnest, these latter congregating in groups of a dozen or a score. With the exception of one white-bearded and stout-figured gentleman of advanced years the laity had disappeared. A rattle of hooves sounded in See Street outside the cloisters and then a body of well dressed civilians hastened by the east gate. Like one man the clergy nearest the fountain turned to stare through the gate and then fell to rapid discussion again.

Doña Agata stood by the fountain gazing at the palm branches idly swaying against the blue sky. The crystalline purity of light seemed to possess the limpidity of water like that in the basin of the fountain. The rustling head of the palm emerged into the still unmellowed brilliance of the afternoon sun. Its hard dry blades sliding one over another made a quiet hissing sound when the breeze pressed upon them, or as they dipped, and the air colliding with the great

## LEAN MEN

wall of the cathedral, was flung down in the well of the cloister, thence to rise in invisible spouts beneath the parasol of leaves. A cluster of sparrows whirled over like the cash railway at the Century Stores in the Rambla, and a white pigeon described an ivory curve and settled upon the greystone of the cloister roof.

Everything exterior spoke of peace to Doña Agata, and everything within as well, except that telephone, and even that was now only a minor annoyance. The slow movement of the palm head was the very symbol of peace to her, there was something hypnotic almost in its suggestiveness. It was so high and aloof, so nearly still, yet breathing, it looked down upon the cloister with a curious suggestion of contemplation, it might have been the genius of the place embodied in the natural semblance of a palm.

Happily she threaded her way through the groups of excited clergy, ignoring them as they her, and stood before the geese.

The hour bell boomed six above the cloister, the palm leaves seemed to tremble with the vibration of the air, and then suddenly to her horror she remembered Catarina. At five she had promised to meet her at the Norte Station, and there was still that wretched telephone call to make.

Señora Trepát hated the telephone. The instrument upon Don Gumersind's table was one reason why her husband's office had always been unsympathetic to her. Though theirs had been one of the first houses in Casco Viejo to install that service, she had never been able to accustom herself to handling it. To be forced to make or answer a call was to be a prey to the most unpleasant excitement. How like a black cobra the instrument reared its head in the centre of the table, full of menacing spite, as if at any moment of solitude it might rattle and hiss with snakelike venom and she would be compelled to answer the call. How she envied Catarina's complete indifference as with huge grasp she collared the reptile and shouted fiercely into its mouth.

The baby Julia had been delighted with the house telephone between the two "offices" when it had first been installed. At every ring of the office bell below she would run over to the table, climb on the chair and struggling to hold the unwieldy receiver to her ear, lisp into the mouthpiece

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

with the professional solemnity copied from her father. And then one day Julia, four years old, had run into the study and grasped the instrument and held it to her ear. Señora Trepat had heard her drop the thing with a shriek and then the child had run screaming to her mother and buried her face in her skirts.

"What's the matter, Julieta, my pet?" Señora Trepat had asked frantically.

"Oh, Mummy," Julia had wailed, "there's a nasty man in the hole, he shouted at me."

Julia had merely answered her first real call, but her daughter's sorrowful weeping had increased Doña Agata's dislike and nervousness.

Catarina would be cross at not having been met and she would have to confide the result of her mission to the Cathedral to her at once if she were to handle the telephone for her mistress as she usually did. No, that would never do. Señora Trepat was almost as frightened now of the thought of announcing her triumph as she had been at the prospect of an encounter with Canon Faixal. Perhaps Don Gumersind would be at home, the possibility aroused in her a panic. No, this would have to be prepared.

Crossing the square before the City Hall she decided to make the telephone call herself, there was a catholic stationer's shop on the corner with a notice upon the wall "Public Telephone Within."

She went in and tremblingly approached the box. She had taken hold of the instrument before she remembered that she would need the convent's call number. Timidly she approached the counter and asked for the directory, a young assistant brought it to her.

"Perhaps I can help you, Señora," he politely offered; "what call do you want?"

"I want to speak to the convent of Las Salesas."

"Las Salesas!" the assistant looked up sharply.

"Ye-es, they have a telephone, haven't they? I was told they had, Canon Faixal at the cathedral. . . ." Why did the assistant stare at her like that? It was most uncomfortable, why was he so rude? They must know her in the shop, she bought all her pious requisites there.

The assistant gave her the number abruptly and then

## LEAN MEN

unaccountably and without courtesies left her and hurried to the door and looked out.

She made her call and after much delay, which she was sure was not all her fault, she was put through. It was terribly hard to hear what the person at the other instrument was saying—a lot of people at once seemed to be babbling to her and then suddenly a loud voice began to speak, addressing someone by the name of Luis. At last she gave her message and replacing the receiver left the box, exhausted with the ordeal.

She sat down a moment and then fortified by a sniff at her smelling salts, went out into the street . . . and gave a little scream of astonishment.

A half-circle of young men with the purple ribbon of the Republic in their lapels, was drawn round the door. A tall man with fierce eyes stepped forward and bowed.

"Madam, you must permit me to question you."

"Oh!" fluttered Doña Agata, clutching her handbag to her abdomen. She tried to step back into the shop. One of the half-circle stepped behind her and extended his arms across the door.

"I beg your pardon, Madam," he murmured respectfully.

Doña Agata stared about her in terror, what were these silent young men? Could she be in the hands of one of those terrible hold-up gangs? No, there was a patrol of the urban police across the road, besides they were all so well dressed. They were so polite too. Memory of the cathedrai and apprehension of Catarina's anger had all disappeared. Yet Señora Trepas felt somehow that this last nightmare was her own fault, she had ventured into the world beyond her circle and this was retribution. Oh had she only stayed within Trepas House or gone quietly to meet dear good Catarina—her servant was only rough-tongued and ill-mannered on the exterior—dear Catarina. . . .

"Madam, will you be kind enough to tell us to whom you have been speaking." The tall young man was glaring at her so frighteningly.

She could not answer him for a moment and he repeated the question with more severity.

"Las Salesas," she replied in a whisper.

"The convent of Las Salesas?"

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

How sharply he spoke, the others immediately began to mutter together with threatening glances at her. What could they mean to do with her? She was going to faint soon, she felt.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me what message you had for Las Salesas?" The tall man had produced a notebook, she saw. People were beginning to collect around them. How awful it would be if someone from the streets across the road were to pass by. Then the tall man signalled to one of the others and the man blew an ear-splitting whistle. The urban patrol doubled over to the pavement.

"Sir!" said the oldest of the patrol, saluting.

"Clear this crowd away, please," said the tall man quietly as if he were giving an order. The policeman's prompt obedience only increased her agitation.

"I am sorry, Señora," the authoritative young man was saying, "but for your own good I must ask you to consider yourself under arrest."

She was going to faint, the air was growing dark. Arrest! Oh Mother of God most holy! She dimly heard her interrogator's words: "Conduct the lady within and bring a chair and water for her."

After five minutes of attention the tall man began to question her again, and then he demanded her name and address.

"Señora Agata Trepát," she began.

"Trepát!" said her questioner with sudden change of tone. "Your address, Madam."

"Cassadors Street."

"M'Carven Deu," whispered the man on her left. "May I ask whether you have a son, Don Guillermo?"

"Yes. . . ." Doña Agata sensed approaching salvation and responded hastily, "Councillor Trepát."

"H'm—very singular indeed," commented the tall man, putting his notebook away and turning to one of his companions. Anxiously she watched them conferring. It seemed an hour before they returned to her and then just as he was about to speak, the principal snapped his fingers peremptorily and motioned towards a customer who had entered the shop. Apologizing profusely, the shopkeeper ushered the customer to the door, which he hastily closed and then approached the group.

## LEAN MEN

"You are the proprietor of this establishment?"

"Yes, Señor, twenty-three years established here."

"Very good—you are acquainted with this lady?"

"Yes, Señor, she is a regular customer here—an esteemed client." The proprietor bowed to Doña Agata who had begun to weep into a handkerchief, which caused the proprietor to make a clicking noise of faint surprise.

"Her name is Señora Agata Trepát?"

"That is so, Señor."

"Very good—you will kindly answer my questions."

The shopman nervously expressed assent.

"Has this lady been in the habit of using the telephone box?"

"No, sir, I think I may say to-day is the first occasion."

"I see—how many calls has she made to-day?"

"Only one, Señor, at least, she has been in only once."

"To whom, Señor? Do you know to whom she made the call?"

"I overheard your remarks at the door, Señor, otherwise I should not know."

"Very good, I thank you, Señor."

The leader motioned the proprietor away and again went into conference with his second-in-command.

"Madam, I think we may permit you to proceed to your home," the tall man was saying. "We may still need to call upon you for evidence at the Civil Governorship, but that, if necessary, we shall arrange with Councillor Trepát. Please accept our apologies for any discourtesy we may have inadvertently committed in the discharge of our duties. You are free to go, Señora."

The young man stood aside and she stood up to go. "One moment, please," interposed the leader, beckoning to the shopkeeper. "Señor, you will be wise to impose silence upon your staff and to permit no extension of rumours. I think it would be better for you also to exercise discretion, señora. Perhaps, Señor," concluded the tall man to the proprietor, "you would be kind enough to escort this lady to her home?" Doña Agata dabbed at her eyes with a fresh sample of cotton print Catarina had asked her to match.

The knots of onlookers had melted away outside, fortunately, but those awful words, "Civil Governorship," had struck yet

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

another terror into her heart. What had she done? Her bewilderment increased her distress. Surely they could never think that she, Señora Trepát, could have committed any crime! How terrible it all was, upon such a day, too! . . .

Her husband was standing at the corner of the table they called hers, Catarina near him in the spot where they placed Don Gumersind's chair. Gumersind must have heard her coming up the stairs. Why had he not opened the door to her, or why had not Catarina? Nothing had gone right since she had left the Cathedral, they had passed Desposoris and Ambrosia at the fountain.

Catarina stared reproachfully at her, with an unpleasant movement of her great eyebrows.

"Good evening, Catarina," she ventured.

"Good evening, Señora." The servant did not reply brusquely as she had expected and Doña Agata smiled wanly at her. Gumersind usually put his face forward for a kiss, why was he looking so queerly at Catarina? "Husband," she whispered and put her hands upon his shoulders. Don Gumersind did not refuse her kiss but yet she felt something strange had happened. Had they heard about her terrible adventure at the stationer's? Her heart beat wildly again. Or perhaps they had been told of her visit to the Cathedral.

And then Don Gumersind without warning said:

"Agata, I am going to Madrid by the night train, help your maid will you?" and withdrew to his own room.

Catarina lifted the leaf of the table and began to spread a cloth in silence. Without speaking she took out bread from the pantry and a ham from the basket she had taken to Torrellas and these she laid on the table. Doña Agata watched her in a kind of stupefaction. Her husband's announcement had seemed incredible, why should Gumersind need to go to Madrid? It was impossible and yet . . . yes, Catarina had laid napkins on the table, and was fetching some *butifarra* from the meat cupboard. She was evidently preparing for Don Gumersind's journey.

"Catarina," she burst out, "Don Gumersind is not really going to Madrid?"

"Yes," the servant frowned at the table. "I'm thinking of going with him."



## LEAN MEN

Was everyone mad this evening? Everything seemed to be going topsy-turvy, her world, so ordered and intelligible was disappearing in a swirl of débris. "But Catarina . . . you can't go . . . I want you here. . . ." She wanted to cry with the stupidity of things.

"Don Gumersind may need me, I'm thinking of going to Madrid."

"You can't, you can't . . . we've got to go to the Cathedral, you can't go." Señora Trepat began to wail.

"I can and I will go to Madrid," shouted the servant, hammering the table with the loaf. Doña Agata gasped with frightened surprise. Catarina had shouted at Don Gumersind once or twice, she had fought a standing battle with Enrique over his right to stack metal on the staircase, but never once had she raised her voice above a proper expostulation to her.

"We've got to go to the Cathedral. . . . Oh Catarina, I'm so sorry I was late."

"Late!" the servant barked angrily.

"I mean that I didn't come to the station. . . ."

"What's this about going to the Cathedral, Agata?" Don Gumersind was standing in the doorway of the inner room, staring at her, his hands were pressed against the seams of his trouser legs, a habit he possessed when at the limit of his capacity to endure annoyance. Hesitantly she replied:

"We are going to clean a chapel at the Cathedral to-morrow, Catarina and I, a new guild, Gumersind." There it was out, or partly out, and she had meant to prepare the way carefully, the words had seemed to speak themselves.

"The Cathedral?"

"Yes, Gumersind."

Trepat looked wildly round the room and then caught his breath as if with sharp pain.

"Damn all churches, damn all cathedrals," he shouted and rushed into the inner room.

What madness was coming over Trepat House she could not tell. It seemed indeed as if she or the rest of the house were all crazy. Señora Trepat burst into tears over the table.

Catarina emitted a subdued "Huy" and put down the knife and went over to the half-open door as if to enter the inner room. She peered into the unlit room and then quietly closed the door and turned and looked at her mistress weeping

## DECLINE OF TREPAT HOUSE

over the table with her face on her forearm. She moved as if about to offer comfort to Doña Agata, and then slowly turning put out her hand towards the door knob. Catarina stood a moment and then let her hand drop.

“Huy, God save us and His sweet Mother give us shelter now,” she whispered as she crossed herself and shuffled slowly into the kitchen.

## CHAPTER XXI

### RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

WITH their usual generosity the general meeting of the Centre had instructed Francis to hire the best piano obtainable, and after scouring the city he obtained one Ricardo had indicated would be to the liking of his friend. They had paid heavily for the hire of the Bechstein. They had also hired chairs and forms and these were being placed in position by volunteers. The place would be ridiculously small for the recital as it was for the present membership of the circle, but he had thought of inviting Ricardo to play again in a public hall at their charge.

From the high spirits prevailing among the helpers he judged that political tension had been diminished by the unanimity of the preceding night. The afternoon newspapers carried the text of a long proclamation by the Civil Governor concerning the panic. In part it ran :

“Not a single doubt exists but that yesterday’s alarm obeyed a preconceived plan, which fortunately did not fructify. . . . The fact is that yesterday the political atmosphere became suddenly tense, not only in Barcelona but throughout the province. The procedure was the same in all parts, without variation, the launching of a rumour to the effect that at six of the afternoon the convents and religious institutions were to be assaulted. The rumour was to some extent successful, the public being presented with the spectacle of certain communities, some obeying the supposed orders of their ecclesiastical authorities, loading motors and carts with their most esteemed possessions. . . . The wide field over which the rumour spread and the simultaneousness of its propagation indicate that the plot was not the work of an isolated group but that it was well organized and executed.”

This was a very reticent description of the state of affairs.

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

The fact was that the whole of the city had been gripped in an apprehension of disaster. With anguish the city remembered the "Tragic Week" of civil war of 1909, when after a period of strikes, such as the city was now traversing, the smoke of burning churches and convents had been the signal for desperate struggle and slaughter in the streets. One thought and one fear had achieved unanimity. Was the city to be plunged into another such tragedy? The panic had spread as if the populace had possessed but one mentality. A terrific thunderstorm had seemed to overhang the city, silence such as precedes an August storm had spread through every district as public services and business animation had first slowed down and then ceased. Not formal strikes but simple desertion from work had been the feature of the afternoon. Factories had ceased to rattle, mills had become dumb, the markets deserted for the plaza where multitudes apprehensively discussed the alarm. Shops were closed and barricaded, banks and financial houses besieged the Civil Governor with requests for guards. Scores of families left the city by what means they could, many going out to pass the night in the forests of Vallvidrera and Les Planes.

And then a contrary movement of civic assertion had commenced. A guard of republican civilians had been formed; organization and individual, from the Centre to the extreme Left, had joined forces to steady the city. Telephone boxes (for in nearly every case the convents had been warned or ordered by telephone) had been policed, the convents guarded and the occupants persuaded to return. The Centre of Free Studies had rapidly organized patrols. There had been a tense moment when Angel Pestaña, the foremost anarchist leader of the syndicates, had presented himself at the porch and asked to see the administrative committee. They had looked at one another in apprehension. So the F.A.I. was aware of their actuation! They sensed trouble for the future but immediately acceded to Pestaña's suggestion that they should join forces until the crisis had passed.

"See here, friend," Pestaña had said to Charing. "Let us be frank, we are for the revolution, our revolution, and you, no doubt, are for yours. But this is not our moment, and if I understand your ideas, it is not yours. Are we agreed?"

## LEAN MEN

A committee of anarchists had joined hands with the Centre, and some thousands of revolutionary workers gone on to the streets to smother the smouldering fires ignited so mysteriously. The socialists also had sent their pickets out. Too late the Civil Governor had ordered all telephone conversations with convents and persons in contact with them to be tapped. One of the convents claimed to have received instructions directly from the Bishop of Barcelona. The See had protested complete ignorance of such instructions. Then by pure chance a person was detected delivering a message to one of the outlying convents. The man, a catholic monarchist, formerly of some small importance during the Dictatorship, had been saved from lynching by the urban guard.

The wildest rumours immediately began to shoot through the city, and like electric currents, increased their voltage by induction, as they circulated. The monarchists were rising in the north; several cities near the frontier had been assaulted; Cardinal Segura, expelled from the country for a political pastoral, was with the insurgents. The fact was that the police had discovered that certain catholic and monarchist committees, recently in reunion, had all disappeared from the city. The Civil Governor himself announced the fact and disclosed the steps he had taken to bar the frontier.

Towards nightfall, encouraged by the presence of often contemptuous but ever respectfully behaving guards, the nuns had all returned to their establishments and the storm had passed.

The following day rumour had broken out again on a minor plane, the affair had been a Jesuit plot, or it had been devised by Cambó and the Lliga, circumstantial details were adduced, usually of an improbable order.

Rumour busied itself with a certain canon of the cathedral chapter in particular. Canon Faixal had definitely given instructions in the case of Las Salesas, it was said. There had been a noisy demonstration of women, youths and children before the canon's lodging and he had been ill-advised enough to attempt a speech in denial. It had been greeted with hisses and "rough music" and the unfortunate man had written letters to the evening press in which he said: ". . . I desire to state categorically that I neither called the convent of Las

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

Salesas by telephone as the aforementioned baseless rumours assert, nor delivered any kind of message to that establishment. My conscience rests perfectly calm before such a charge and I wish to protest that my name, that of a respectful and I hope respected adherent of civil order should have been coupled with the affair of yesterday."

The letter had been immediately redistributed by one of the news agencies, ever searching for dry fuel. That evening, in the tavern of Sant Pau de les Campanes, hidden among the folds of the Catalan Pyrenees, and in that of Castell del Rochfort, lost in the arid immensity of the Leridan Plain, Canon Faixal's name became either the symbol of jesuitic plotting and evasion or the watchword of dignified innocence and unworldly aloofness.

There was a sharp exclamation outside at the head of the staircase and then Alonso's voice rang out from the office, forbidding someone to enter. More voices joined in the discussion, and then Villanova put his head into the library and asked Francis to come out.

The dwarf Isidro was standing at the last turn of the staircase arguing dully with Alonso. The latter was declaring:

"I've told you a dozen times you will not be admitted to this place again. Why the hell do you come? We don't want you."

"All right, shepherd's dog." Elipe had given this name to Alonso because he was all ribs and bone, or so the strong man asserted. "And I don't want you neither."

"Clear off, then," ordered the Murcian roughly.

"I want to come in—I want to hear the music."

"Music! What the devil do you want with music?"

"I don't want to hear your chin," muttered Isidro, "I want to come in. I've bought a ticket, you can't turn me out."

"Bought a ticket!" Alonso looked round at the other. "Say, do you hear that?"

They had placed a few tickets for reserved seats on sale at the agencies at expensive prices, more to secure advertisement than for any desire to recoup losses.

"Where's your ticket, shortarse?" the Murcian demanded. The dwarf produced a blue ticket.

"Jesus! Say, are you taking a box at the opera to-morrow? Taken up yachting yet, monkey face?"

## LEAN MEN

"You can't turn me out," persisted Isidro, producing a much-thumbed programme, "I've paid for a seat and bought my *analytical* programme."

"A programme, oh, Mother of God!" This was something more than they had expected. The dwarf had been turned away from the Centre repeatedly since the day when the prisons had been stormed. Alonso had threatened to resign if he were readmitted. They had supposed this purchase of a ticket was a pretext for entering the premises and that Isidro hoped to curry favour with them. But the blue ticket for the most expensive of the seats and the tattered programme, evidently read and reread, seemed to argue sincerity.

"Since when have you been interested in music?" asked Francis.

"I've paid for my seat, you can't chuck me out," the dwarf stuck to his refrain.

"Brought your gun then, or a rattle?"

"No—you can search me," flared Isidro.

"Oh, well, shall we let him in boys?" The Murcian gave an impression of wishing to leave the decision in their hands.

"He'll be all right," answered Vilanova. "What do you say, Francisco?"

"Let him in—you're rather early, Señor," continued Francis to Isidro. "The concert isn't until nine o'clock."

"Eight o'clock," replied the dwarf.

"I'm afraid you're mistaken, do you see this?" Charing plucked the edge of the bill hanging on the office door. "Nine o'clock prompt, you're over-prompt."

"It says eight o'clock on the ticket," Isidro grumbled, holding it towards them. Francis took the ticket from him and read it. The dwarf was correct, eight o'clock was the hour stated.

"All right, go on in, one of the front seats on the left," said Alonso. "Say, I wonder how many of these have been sold? It's damned funny we didn't notice that."

"I expect Pere overlooked it," replied Vilanova. "You see the tickets were ordered when Gerard was still secretary. I don't suppose we've had any here for a long time."

"Better ring up the agents, I think." Francis reached for the instrument and was put through. The first agent had sold five tickets, the second had disposed of all he had taken.

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

In all some forty had found buyers. The firm from whom they had hired the piano had bought two and given them to critics.

"Nice mess we're in now," exclaimed Alonso. "Where shall we put the frock coats when they turn up?"

Shortly afterwards the first ticket holders began to arrive. Not all of them were mollified by the apologies Francis presented, nor by the coffee and spirits they supplied as an effort to make amends. Then as Francis was shutting the library registers away the Murcian called through the door:

"Oh boy, what next! Say, do you know we've got ministers of the Republic turning up? Come out and do your stuff."

He had thought this to be a piece of leg-pulling, but as he went out he saw that it was indeed the case. He had ordered five tickets to be sent to Trepat House and Guillermo had turned up with Nicolau de Rivière; now a Minister of the Madrid Government.

"Francis, you'll get cells and dungeons for this," whispered Alonso as they approached the couple, but his friend's face merely glowed with pleasure. De Rivière was frankly delighted to meet Francis again and linked arms with him.

"I've been telling Trepat here all about our mountaineering trip," he exclaimed to Alonso's bewilderment. "I couldn't resist this opportunity to call on you, since you never seem to visit me in Madrid."

They chatted animatedly for a few minutes, during which de Rivière begged Francis to spend the following day with him, motoring to an engagement, and then Francis explained the confusion that had arisen. De Rivière made light of it and merely asked for a table so that he might continue working. Fortunately the presence of the Minister restored interest among the early comers, most of them Republicans. The opportunity to discuss events with someone in authority was not to be missed. De Rivière's papers remained untouched. He did not seem to grieve about it.

By eight o'clock when some thirty of the reserved seats had been filled and one half of the open seats in the salon, Vilanova suggested to Francis that it would be as well to fetch Ricardo and his pianist by taxi, there would be little doubt that the concert could be commenced long before nine.

It was not until he had hailed a taxi in the Rambla that he



## LEAN MEN

remembered that they did not know Ricardo's private address; the latter's correspondence had been addressed from the Pompeya. He doubted whether the 'cellist would be at the music hall this evening. It would be wiser to call on the pianist, Señora Montserrat Corominas. There had been some kind of hitch about the pianist and Ricardo had called one day and hinted that she might appreciate a personal invitation to perform. By reason of Gerard Camps's illness the request had not been complied with and Ricardo had written earnestly requesting them to offer the engagement to Señora Corominas. He had called at the Pompeya to apologize and make a few final inquiries concerning the programme, and during the conversation the musician had steered it round to the subject of a direct invitation again. He explained that the pianist was a young widow supporting herself with great difficulty by giving pianoforte lessons. With evident embarrassment he had added that Montserrat Corominas was exceedingly . . . well, independent of spirit, and had refused his, Ricardo's invitation as savouring of charity.

"I played with her often—years ago," explained the musician with tortured sensitiveness. "I've taken works familiar to her for that reason."

"You must excuse me," Francis had replied. "Isn't it rather precarious, rehearsing works without your accompanist?" The musician had evaded a direct answer, and then as he was leaving asked if the Centre could afford the hire of a studio for one afternoon should Señora Corominas consent.

The pianist had replied formally accepting the engagement to play with Señor Ricardo Trepas y Marsans; and later a modest bill for the hire of a studio had been sent to them from a suburban school of music.

He directed the taxi-driver to the pianist's address in Sans and took out a programme intending to scan through the annotation which Ricardo had supplied. The light in the roof was insufficient, however, and he sat back and fell into a musing anticipation of pleasure. He felt a deep need of music, an interlude in his constant absorption in the problems of the revolution. To spend his whole waking day, to be ceaselessly thinking and feeling revolution, consciously and subconsciously had produced a tension within that cried for

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

release. He decided to accept Nicolau's invitation for the following day; he had not seen a stretch of pine forest or a bare heath or a white-walled garden since his visit to Mallorca, when he had walked with Teresa over the Lluch col to wind-milled Inca from the banal monastery hotel complete with barber's and tailor's shop and tout's office, where Mariscal's sister had been staying.

The temporary healing of division which the monarchist scare of yesterday had effected had been very welcome to Francis. These first two months of the Republic had seen a perilous sharpening of every antagonism within the city. The first unanimity of relief and enthusiasm had soon disappeared. Discord had penetrated even into the Centre, the constant influx of associates had brought its own problems. Many of the newcomers had not discarded their anarchistic outlook and habit of mind, although but few had professed "the Idea" explicitly. To instruct this mass efficiently was really beyond them at present. Huge funds of tact, a quality which disappears with fatigue, were needed, moreover.

In the city, strikes and lockouts followed one another without order or system. All their attempts to link them together in an educative way or to control their outbreak had failed. It was true that it was the sound sense of the Centre factions within the syndicates that had brought them their numbers. It was significant, too, that strikes dominated by their members frequently won. To down tools for a modest five pesetas a week and the building of clean lavatories and better workshop illumination, etc., was much more likely to be profitable than striking for the wild demands usually put forward by the anarchists. What was needed was not to sharpen the class struggle, already agonizingly acute, but to discipline it and give it hope of victory in the greater fight.

There were greater difficulties than these. The dissension between socialist and anarchist had widened and deepened. From the docks it had spread to other industries like a summer contagion. A certain wood veneer manufacturer in the Carretera del Puerto had closed his factory on the fifteenth of April in answer to a demand of the Syndicate for the reinstatement of an employee dismissed for absence without leave on the fourteenth, the day of the declaration of the Republic. Reopening, he was met with a strike, not unanimous, however,

## LEAN MEN

for the U.G.T. organization, adhering to the policy of the socialist party, decided to return. A fierce struggle had broken out, pistols had been drawn and thirteen injured, four or five gravely. The U.G.T. union had next morning visited the Civil Governor to lay the blame upon the syndicalist body. This had fanned the embers of strife into a fresh outburst.

These struggles were not motivated by personal differences, but sprang definitely from principles. The socialist participation in the Madrid Government had involved the adoption of the policy of compulsory arbitration in labour disputes. A committee had been appointed in all centres of industry, and before this employers and men were required to present their cases. The object had been to pacify and to formalize, doubtless; the result had been quite the contrary. The Syndicates refused to acknowledge the State's interference, which would, they said, eventually mean nothing more than reinforcement for the employers. However, the socialist unions, a small minority in Catalunya but a majority in Castille and the Biscay provinces, claimed to speak for the whole of the working class as a result. The "Free" unions had disappeared beneath general contempt and derision. Decisions of the court being binding upon the industry: the result was that the mass of the Catalan workers felt that the activity of the socialist unions was a piece of sharp practice. The most hated name in Barcelona was that of Largo Caballero, more Long than Gentleman, it was said, the minister responsible for this policy, which he had advanced during the Dictatorship, of whose Advisory Council he had formed part. A third complication was the growth of all kinds of communist opinion. The Centre had now nearly one thousand two hundred members, the Workers' and Peasants' Block claimed as many, the small Trotskyist faction headed by Andres Nin, former secretary to the Russian ex-leader, was also active. The greatest personal difficulty, however, was the presence of the small official communist party local, whose principal leader was one Quiñones, recently arrived from Madrid. Their only public figure at this time was Helios Gomez, an artist, formerly anarchist, then of the Block, who, expelled from the Centre, had finally joined the official party from which he was ultimately dismissed. Francis knew that this formation of a party was a mistake. The opportunist

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

Catalanism of the Block must be opposed, but a disciplined party was out of the question at this stage. Quiñones, however, persisted in urging Francis to permit him to canvass for members at the Centre. Rebuffed, he had begun a complicated manoeuvring with Madrid, and being quite aware of Charing's status, threatened to have his conduct reported to the International. Probably as a result of Quiñones's interference Francis commenced to receive critical letters from the Party's organizer in Andalucía where problems were completely different.

Charing's policy was a perfectly clear one. The Centre was to be used as a means of intensive education in Marxist theory. Later the whole politic of the Party was to be introduced and then with the aid of subsidiary bodies a Party might safely be formed. It was a policy demanded both time and thoroughness. The latter condition they had reasonably fulfilled. Texido and he, with Pere Camps and several of the better prepared associates, were delivering courses of lectures and directing study circles. An excellent library had been formed, including, besides revolutionary text-books, the best of Spanish literature and a large body of technical craft books, this latter section being exceedingly popular. The Bulletin, now that secrecy was no longer necessary, had become a fairly prosperous fortnightly; its policy might be described as that of the United Front. Its literary features had earned it respect in all circles.

The problem of time, however, was a nightmare to the direction of the Centre. Revolutionary fervour was rising rapidly, the masses were no longer content with the musical comedy promises of the Republic. "Liberty of conscience" might appeal to the intellectual, but in such matters as religion they had no need of such concessions. Religious faith had been largely stamped out by the combined forces of natural grossness, reasoned atheist propaganda, and the Church. Education, now on the increase, was almost fanatically revered, but that would be even more securely guaranteed by a new order of society. For the rest nothing serious had been done nor looked like being done. The gentlemen of the republican parties were more intent upon anti-clerical debates and cultural projects, the whole inspired by the idea of cheap government, than upon radical reforms. Their influence among the masses was rapidly diminishing.

## LEAN MEN

The F.A.I. had tightened its hold upon the syndicates, and a desperate struggle was being waged within the unions, between the factions of the Centre, often in conjunction with the Block, on the one hand, and the anarchist controllers on the other. It was a fiercely contested battle in the form of a race. Day by day the political temperature grew higher. Would it be possible to organize a sound and disciplined party before the revolutionary pressure should explode into action? If not, tragic defeat of the inevitable rising would follow, and upon it the loss of the few advantages secured by the change of government, the Republic itself might be overthrown. There were some within the Centre who thought that an atmosphere of repression would favour their propaganda. This error, when expressed by Vilanova, had occasioned a long debate around a passage in Lenin's *State and Revolution* in which that theorist had stated that the broadest and most open forms of struggle are the best.

The eternal menace of the women's vote, certain now to be granted by the Republic, loomed behind all political discussions. It was certain that the women would vote for reaction. Every intelligent reader of the past knew what a restoration of the power of the Monarchy and the Church would mean. Many of the Centre and Right thought thus. Even supposing the conservative forces were democratically placed in power, it would be the end of any hope of peace. The Monarchy and the Church might maintain their grip upon the reins of Government, but the inevitable violence of protest and suppression would split the country from end to end, even more than was now occurring. The Church, they knew, would never realize that its day had passed, that though it might re-achieve power it would do so at the cost of hatred and disorder, never by unanimous consent. There were many Catholics who understood this. Their unencouraged hope was that at last the Church would waive its claims to exclusive rights over the nation's conscience, and having learned to abstain from all worldly participation, would once more take its place in society as an instrument of salvation.

A tactical stupidity equally gross existed on the republican side. Charing had written an article for the Bulletin which had ensured a third reprint within a week. Anti-clerical measures of the kind proposed were a complete mistake, he

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

had argued. The Republican Coalition, anxious only to establish a moderate democracy, would destroy democracy by challenging a too-powerful enemy, the Church. It was the duty of leaders never to confront the enemy until they had sufficient force to give reasonable hope of victory. To declare that the democratic vote henceforward was to be the sole arbiter of the nation's future, to grant the women's vote and then simultaneously to attack the Church, was to invite disaster. Female suffrage, always opposed by the Church, for many decades would be a weapon in the hands of the Church.

With the Church the true revolutionary doctrine was All or None, the Church's own rule of behaviour. First your revolution, driving down into the roots of property, your creation of a new state, a new army and civil service, and the forging of a powerful political party, and then, with a formidable and unique armoury of power one might turn upon the Church and destroy its political and temporal power, upon which its life really depended. Until such a revolution had been achieved, the Church must be left alone to wither, as it undoubtedly was withering. The purely democratic means of weakening the Church were by increased education and suchlike measures. Legislative attacks, even though just and perhaps desired by a majority of the male electorate, were folly.

Within the structure of a society founded upon private property many of these projects were not even just. The Church's titles to its properties were as sound as most titles, sounder than those of many of the *latifundistas*, the great landlords of Andalucía. Francis had argued similarly in respect of the ecclesiastical salaries. That burden had been placed upon the taxpayer in virtue of a bargain, perhaps a bad bargain, by which the Church had, against its will, of course, exchanged its lands for a guaranteed income. Within the limits of a property society it was unjust to deprive it of that income. It mattered nothing that quite probably much of its former and present possessions had been obtained by means ultimately disreputable. To take the familiar propaganda case of salvation and bliss hereafter being guaranteed against a substantial legacy to the Church, what happened? Property was transferred from one person to a corporate body. No additional harm was done to the peasant, who

## LEAN MEN

starved under either owner. Indeed some good was done. The Church was made more holy, for had not its treasure of grace increased as it had grown wealthier? The testator in his turn obtained everlasting glory and reunion with his Maker.

Besides, he had argued, even to single out the Roman Church for special measures was a theoretical confusion, unless it were because that Church was more definitely a propertied class than others. All religions, he had pointed out, were more or less openly opposed to serious efforts to create a better world. It was not even a question of the means, the aim itself was contrary to religion, which had definite guarantees of its own eventual Utopia for all. In that case, the object of revolution being happiness in this world and damnation in the next, all religion must be opposed, and the more sharply as their attitude was obscure, for in that case they might enter the parties of reform and revolution, weakening them and eventually destroying them. They must, therefore, oppose any measure which might strengthen religion, as distinct from the Roman Church. Consequently they must condemn Article Three of the Provisional Statement, guaranteeing the liberty of cults. It was this paradoxical reversal of the popular opinion which provoked the most heated discussion in the Centre as elsewhere. Francis had argued that the chief cause of the decline in religious belief in Spain was the iron rigidity of Catholic belief and the uniqueness of religious opportunity. If a person found it impossible, say, to believe in Transubstantiation, or the doctrine of Sacramental Grace, then such a person had perforce to cease the public practice of religion. There were no other churches he might attend. This was precisely what had happened. The result had been the expected one. Persons so cut off from social corroboration almost invariably at last lost the rest of their beliefs. The theory and fact of One Church, One Faith had enormously weakened the hold of religion as such. The example of England was ready to his pen. Precisely because of the infinite diversity of intellectual content the practice of religion in England was far more common than in Spain. The Roman Church, he had pointed out, had partially recognized that by developing an interior diversity of cults, the faithful might practise devotion to this saint or

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

that, to this aspect of Christ's divinity or another, to the whole Christ or to a part of Christ. But this was merely to accommodate differences of temperament, whereas the difficulty was fundamentally an intellectual one. To those who argued that Protestantism could never even get a footing in Spain he pointed out that in that case liberty of conscience was unnecessary. He did not hesitate to say that the sponsors of Article Three were not really interested in the liberty of cults, they merely lacked sufficient candour to say the measure was intended to strike at the Roman Church.

This revolutionary doctrine was being totally ignored by the Government. Proposals for the denationalization of the Church, for the limitation of its rights to property, the control of the religious orders, for the expulsion of the Jesuits were being debated and might in the near future be made law, entirely without the ultimate backing of social force required.

Even in the smallest department of government intellectualist theories were being followed. It was the decent boast of the Civil Governor that he had begun the work of remoralizing the city. A certain number of brothels had been closed, "furnished establishments" had been shut, gambling restrictions tightened, prostitution dealt with, with totally abortive results. These measures lacked the fierce inspiration of Revolution to turn their refreshing but feeble breezes into irresistible hurricanes of renovation. Such measures were doomed to be utterly lost in a wilderness of impurity. Nevertheless, even in his most strenuous articles Francis had never found it in his heart to mock these puny endeavours. Upon his second visit to Ricardo at the Pompeya he had been filled with profound sadness. . . .

The taxi stopped before a two-storeyed stucco-fronted house without balconies. Dismissing the taxi he approached the door. In the grilled window was a card: "Señora Montserrat Corominas, Pianoforte and Theory of Music. First Floor." He rang the first-floor bell and almost at once heard steps descending. A girl of about seventeen years opened the door.

"Señora Corominas, is she in, please?" asked Francis.

"Yes, sir, have you an appointment? She will be unable to receive you to-night, I am afraid."

"I have no appointment, but that won't matter. I am the



## LEAN MEN

director of an institution at which Señora Corominas is playing to-night."

"Oh, yes, Señor, will you come in?"

The girl led the way by narrow stairs to the first floor and without formality invited him into a living-room. A woman of perhaps thirty years jumped up with a start from a divan upon which she had been sitting. A few toys lay upon it with which she had apparently been amusing a boy of about three years.

"María!" exclaimed the woman. "You should have told me you were bringing up a gentleman."

"Oh, but Señora, the Señor is the director of the concert," the girl replied.

"Yes? You must pardon me, Señor, the girl is the daughter of a neighbour whom I have asked to take care of my son." The woman seemed hesitating whether to offer him her hand, and then the girl whisked a chair from the wall and with a form that was more of a command than a request cheerfully indicated that he might sit, and then promptly busied herself with the child and a toy horse which she called Rosinante.

Señora Corominas begged to be excused a moment, and retired to the other room. He looked about him. It was clear that the pianist was living quietly and with restricted means, but there was no sign of poverty. The furniture of the room was simple but unusual in a Spanish home. A carpet covered the tiled floor, much worn around the piano which stood against the wall opposite the landing door. Pushed into one corner was a divan of an English type, covered with some material of coarse texture and good taste in hue, a neutral blue. A large table occupied the middle, upon which was a volume of Kropotkin, there were two chairs besides the one he was occupying and a music stool. A music shelf of plain carpentry stood beside the piano, painted a blue approaching the colour of the divan. There was no religious emblem in the room, nor any decoration at all.

The instrument explained Ricardo's preference for the Bechstein, a pre-war example of that maker; the upright case was of black wood, its candle sconces having been removed.

The pianist returned, having changed her dress. She now wore a costume of black velveteen which looked as if it had

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

been recently altered. Her appearance had been very striking in her house dress; this semi-professional attire heightened the effect considerably. She was not beautiful in any accepted sense. Dark hair, somewhat lustreless, was pulled back lightly from her forehead and gathered behind her head with combs. Her face, large and open, was more than usually pale, faint rings beneath her eyes intensified the unchanging melancholy of her gaze. Slender, almost to thinness, her body seemed almost virginal and, except for a suggestion of fatigue, did not resemble that of a Spanish mother. Her speech pleased his ear with a faintly foreign accent. That she was Spanish was evident, but her Catalan, delicately pronounced with none of its broad vowels, like those of the West of England dialects which characterize the normal Catalan, suggested it was not her usual tongue. Listening carefully as she thanked him for the engagement, he thought she might be a Valencian. He explained the object of his call, and hastily she began to place several scores that had been lying on the top of the piano in her case.

The girl María lifted up the boy to her, and as she turned to the child Francis once more had opportunity to see her face clearly. Only once before had he seen eyes so intensely expressive; they vividly recalled the penetrating stare Don Nicolau's mother had turned upon them from what had proved to be her death bed. That had been a piercing shaft of unrelenting will, of hatred and distrust; this impression of de Rivière's mother had never faded from his memory. This woman had in her eyes the presence of a sorrow of some rare kind that did not admit of tragedy. What hint of submission to whatever sorrow or privation had been her experience, seemed to him to be merely the accidental effect of her high cheekbones, which gave her a vaguely oriental expression. The interval in which her eyes rested upon the child, no more than a score of seconds, for she took him into her arms and whispered quietly to him as she pressed her face to his dark-haired head, sufficed to etch an unforgettable image upon Charing's memory. It was a face of sorrow she bore even in turning to the boy, tempered by something that hinted not at resignation but at comfort, at refinement and quality within itself . . . if sorrow may possess the vulgar characteristics of other emotions.

## LEAN MEN

A musical image sounded at once in his mind. her indefinably sad face made just that impression upon him that certain dissonances evoked in the music of Bach—there was one indescribable passage in the Andante of the Brandenburg in F—a passage of painful heart-quelling sweetness, filled with the whole spirit of music, a dissonance which had in it nothing of the coarse stuff of drama. The impression Montserrat Corominas made upon him was exactly that of the magnificent opening lute phrase of Dowland's "I saw my lady weep," music which he had thought too lovely for any human weeping.

They descended to the street and walked to a café-bar where they might reasonably expect to obtain a taxi. The proprietor willingly telephoned to the nearest rank. Francis found it difficult to open conversation with the pianist, so profoundly had she impressed him.

"I hope you will find our audience sympathetic to you," he ventured. "I expect Ricardo will have explained something of the circumstances, however."

"No."

"He has not? That is very remiss of him, I am afraid. You know of course that the recital will not be public in the ordinary sense. The audience will be composed chiefly of working men—you will find no technical or cultured understanding among them, but you can be certain of real appreciation—they will have come to hear music. We have distinguished company, by the way, Señor Nicolau de Rivière will be present."

"Is that so—I did not imagine such a possibility." The woman appeared to reply conventionally.

"And probably a few professional critics. I understand two at least are likely to attend."

"Yes? . . . I did not know of this." A melancholy note sounded in her reply.

"Nor did we, Señora, until this evening, neither did Ricardo know; he is not to blame. I understand that you have played with Ricardo before, the Grieg Sonata and the smaller pieces, at least. We were very willing to provide you with a studio for continued rehearsal had you wished."

"It was not necessary. I have memorized the scores," the pianist replied remotely. "Señor Trepas and I have played

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

together, some years ago, though rarely before an audience. I ought to tell you that I have little recital experience." She was a little nervous, he gathered.

"Oh, that is of no importance, Señora. I am sure Ricardo will have sure judgment." The woman's face vaguely expressed displeasure; it was a vulgar remark, he at once realized. "I imagine he has little experience himself, is that not so? I have heard him play, nevertheless."

"You have? . . . Señor Trepat has more experience than I have of playing in public."

The taxi drew up and the café proprietor opened the door.

"Where to, Señor?" asked the driver.

"Oh, pardon me, Señora—I am not aware of Ricardo's address; perhaps you will be kind enough to tell the driver."

"Señor Trepat's? Are we not going directly to the hall? Would you not? . . ."

"It is too late—really it would be wiser to pick him up, if he has not already left, I think."

Señora Crominas hesitated, and then said, "Conde del Asalto 67."

The car eventually began to thread its way down the picaresque street of the "Chinese Quarter."

"No. 67 you said, I believe, Señora," Francis remarked, peering at the numbers. "Would you recognize the house?"

"I should not," she replied, so tersely that he realized that the district did not meet with her approval. The name Montserrat indeed probably indicated a family of special devotion to religion, her refinement was above that of the professional classes, also.

The taxi drew to a standstill outside an ecclesiastical wax and candle shop. Faded pasteboard medallions, scapularies and religious trinkets of cheap metal stampings dangled in the window. A large statue of the Sacred Heart was festooned with rosaries. The candles themselves hung by their wicks from hen-perches of wood or stood in glass jars at the back of the window. Francis stepped into the doorway and inquired for Ricardo of the proprietor, who appeared to be palsied. He was directed to the third floor by an old woman with her hair down and a towel round her shoulders who peered out of the inner gloom. The side door to the upper floors was open, and he ascended the uncarpeted and loose-boarded

## LEAN MEN

stairs. At the second floor a door opened and a girl leaned out.

"Good evening—oh!" she giggled, and then shut the door again as Francis strode on.

The 'cellist had not set out, his instrument was standing against the wall.

"I have a taxi outside, Ricardo; I've been out to Sans to pick up your pianist. Dash along, there's a good fellow."

"Señora Corominas?" The impression of reluctance to meet his pianist which Ricardo's question conveyed seemed to flow back over her remark concerning the 'cellist. It was rather an odd combination, he thought; there seemed to be no cordiality at all between them. Probably Ricardo was ashamed at having to meet Señora Corominas in this quarter, he supposed that the woman had played with him before he had flung away the career which everyone who had known him agreed might have been his. That would increase his shame to an insufferable limit, of course.

"Oh no, it isn't far, Francisco—no more than five minutes—I'll be along at once. I have to put a new string on my instrument.

It would be unfair to provoke nervousness in the musician just before the performance, he knew, and accordingly replied:

"As you like then, the hall will be full and I think it would be as well to begin at once."

"Have no anxiety, I shall come immediately I have finished restringing, a matter of a few minutes." The 'cellist's relief was unmistakable. As Francis went down the stairs he heard the second floor door shut softly as if someone had been watching his descent.

This desire of Ricardo's for the services of his former partner was distinctly curious and unwise, he thought. Was he relying upon some already ascertained unanimity of interpretation and setting this against the effect of their reciprocal embarrassment? With the exception of the Cassadó suite, a modern and very nervous work, there could be little in the programme which would give difficulty to Ricardo; the Grieg Sonata which he had chosen because he conjectured that its pleasant intelligibility would assist the audience, and the set of shorter pieces would all be facile material to him. The

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

Cassadó, he remembered, was a new work, and they could have practised it together only at their one meeting at the studio. The 'cellist was trying to re-win respect from the pianist, then. Possibly his motives were not musical, he decided.

"Will the *maestro* play the first item again, please?" the speaker was asking. "The request is from a group who have appreciated it." The support which the request received was a revelation of something more than appreciation to Francis. The Folk-song Suite of Joaquim Nin was passable music, not more than a soberly atmospheric and slightly Gallicized setting of good melodies. These dockers, mechanics, textile workers and others were all of them of the city, most of them from families long acclimatized to the city. Yet no sooner had the 'cello begun to sing those melodies of the field and the mountain-side, the olive grove and the vineyard, than there had been exchanged between friend and friend glances of recognition. Castilian had smiled at Castilian, and Andalus at Andalus; these were the melodies of the home village and the little town away back in the broken hills and the ashen plains long forgotten by the tongue, submerged beneath the intrusive sounds of the city and now drawn with glowing lustre from obscure wells of memory. Instantaneously something more than this understanding had awakened in Francis Charing's mind. Here was the explanation of the anarchy of rebellion in the city. Anarchism was, he knew, of agricultural origin, a theory suited to the simpler and more personal problems of the country-side. In rebellion these men became peasants again . . . just as in listening to this music of their forgotten hills and plains. The small-scale primitive state of Spanish industry would favour anarchism, moreover.

In a subtler way this probably explained why the Grieg Sonata had been more intelligible to them than the Cassadó. The former work, the creation of a mind not wholly alien to their natural lyricism, instinct with hills and fields and open sky, despite its alien idiom, had captured their affection. The Cassadó, rhapsodic, passionate and nervous, had pleased them less. Its Spanish idiom had counted in its favour, of course, those scales and modes, those cadences and harmonic effects were natural elements of musical speech to them, but

## LEAN MEN

into its nervousness and excitability the city and modern culture had entered and had preponderated. Finely played, from memory, by both executants, it had been a comparative failure, to Ricardo's evident disappointment.

As the applause subsided Isidro stood up in the front row and fumbled with his programme. Francis had occasionally glanced at the dwarf. His expression had been enigmatic throughout. His attention had not visibly wandered, but he had given no sign of pleasure or understanding, although he had applauded with the others. Once or twice it had seemed that an expression of fleeting pain or troubled bewilderment had appeared in his unbroken staring at the executants, only to vanish at once. If Isidro had attended merely in order to curry favour then he had shown unusual discipline, for he was always impatient, and often openly contemptuous of intellectual talk.

"Will the *maestro* play the piece in number three," began the dwarf. The cellist had played a group of unaccompanied pieces drawn from the six sonatas of Bach, the two bourrées from the C Major and other movements. "The one like this . . ." and to the embarrassment of his refined neighbours the dwarf hummed the first phrase of the sarabande from the Sonata No. 6 in D.

"That's it," several called from behind the reserved seats. "Play that one, *maestro*."

Ricardo nodded at the dwarf, and pausing a moment over his instrument, began the sarabande once more. Again the troubled expression appeared on Isidro's face. It was the little phrase in E Minor rather than the luscious first melody which affected him, Francis noted. It was rather strange, too, that the dwarf should have hummed the theme exactly, holding the F. sharps for their relative lengths, a minim and a dotted minim.

In the library afterwards there were toasts and congratulations for the musicians, the critic of *La Vanguardia* offering the first. Ricardo had played finely, there was no doubt, though the gaps in his technique were painfully evident, especially to himself. Francis had seen the anguished look which followed a succession of rough notes in the Rhapsody of the Cassadó suite and the glance of sympathy which Montserrat Corominas had given him before they tackled the Aragonesa. It

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

had seemed to him that the 'cellist had struggled to express gratitude in his playing after that interval. It had been an interesting spectacle, the gradual approximation of the two artists. The easy pianoforte part of the Nin and its comparative lack of interest for a thorough musician had permitted Señora Corominas to watch her partner. Cold and analytical aloofness had been the feature of her attitude towards him at first. The Grieg had called an artistic co-operation into existence which had at once justified the 'cellist's persistence. The final work, its chords and rhythms only just within the pianist's technique, had nevertheless done more than justify the partnership. Ricardo had revealed an almost desperate abandon which would surely have pulled the music to pieces without Señora Corominas's unifying restraint. The 'cellist in his quick glances at the pianist had acknowledged as much, the music had seemed very like the headlong race of a finely spirited horse controlled by a reticent yet nervously sensitive brain. The two had gazed frankly at one another with an open smile of pleasure at the finish, and almost instantaneously the smile faded from the pianist's face.

The critic Planellas, himself a composer of good songs, was pressing Ricardo to repeat the programme elsewhere.

"Man alive—I remember when you first came out—I've had much to think of since then, Señor Trepát, but several times I've wondered what could have happened to you." Ricardo's face twitched at the words, Planellas was well aware of the true state of affairs. "Now then—take my advice—repeat this programme first and then retire for a while—form a quartet—yes, that's the best course, form a quartet, it's no use expecting to stand by yourself for years yet, or teach a few selected pupils if you can get them, and then come out again as soon as you feel justified." Trepát shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll be open with you," urged Planellas. "I'm going to give you, both of you, a good notice," he looked round at the pianist who stood apart, apparently indifferent to the conversation. "You won't give a damn for my opinion, I know . . . I shouldn't if I were you, but the public will—at least a section of them, those that matter in any case. What do you think of my suggestion, a quartet, or a pianoforte trio perhaps, eh? Perhaps that's even better. Señora Corominas here will agree with me. I'll speak to Manén next week if you like,



## LEAN MEN

he'll be back from Berlin, he's sure to have a pupil or someone in mind. A trio then?" Ricardo was listening excitedly, but with doubt, and his expression did not change while Planellas continued discussing the Cassadó suite.

Guillermo drew Francis aside to join de Rivière. The young smith, for so Francis thought of him despite his councillorship, put out both hands to him. "The Virgin be praised," he blurted in an excited undertone; "Señor Charing . . . you've . . . you've saved my brother . . . I know you understand him . . . you know what has been the matter with him. My God, de Rivière, you'll think I'm as mad as an Englishman, oh! excuse me, Francis . . . but I'd give my right arm to see Ricardo out of that whoremongering Pandemonium where he plays. . . ."

"Sh! Not so loudly," interjected de Rivière, "there are ladies present." Montserrat Corominas was standing between them and Ricardo. "Where does he play, then?"

"At the Pompeya, on Paralelo . . . you know the kind of place."

"Caramba!" the minister whispered.

"Nicolau, I beg you—Señor Charing, lend your weight—Francis here helped you, I helped you. . . ."

"Yes, yes," de Rivière emphasized the affirmation.

"Can't you do something for my brother? Yes, it's corruption if you like—but a man can be forgiven for asking favours for his brother—isn't that so, Francis?"

"I'll think about it," replied the minister, "there may be something I can do. I've nothing in mind at the moment but I'll do what I can."

Ricardo joined them and stood aside a little as an invitation to the pianist to enter the circle. She acknowledged the invitation only by facing them. Guillermo and de Rivière began to offer their congratulations, the younger Trepas by throwing his arms about his brother and kissing him on both cheeks, a frankness uncommon amongst Catalans.

"How about it, Ricardo?" Francis asked. "I heard the critic's advice. Believe me, it's sound."

"There are difficulties . . ." began the 'cellist.

He understood that well enough, Lydia had told him what he had not suspected, that even to the finished artist considerable capital resources were necessary at first.

## RISE OF RICARDO TREPAT

"Would you accept another engagement here—two more, if you could get a trio together? I am speaking without my committee, of course, but you have seen what enthusiasm music arouses."

The musician replied at once: "I should be very pleased . . . there are difficulties. . . ."

"More difficulties?" bantered Francis; Ricardo did not smile. "Ah well, will you not accept the engagements, Señora Corominas? Again I am speaking without authority, but we should be pleased to offer you yourself an engagement—as soloist. What do you say?"

The pianist coloured slightly, but did not answer.

"Señora, for God's sake," burst out Guillermo, and then controlled himself, his eyes pleaded with the woman. She met them frankly and after a pause replied "Yes" without hesitation. Ricardo began to wring his hands in the exquisiteness of his tension.

It was time to dissolve the party, Francis could see, the musicians would be tired and Ricardo's hypersensitive temperament, the cause, no doubt, of his continual quarrels with Don Gumersind, was being unnecessarily strained. He tapped on the window and Vilanova went round to the door.

"Fetch two taxis, will you?" Francis asked. "The players wish to leave."

Ricardo at once protested: the journey was too short and he wanted fresh air, too. Vilanova proceeded to the office and rang for one taxi. Before the car arrived Ricardo presented his excuses, and without attempting more than brief thanks, bowed to his partner and left.

As they were escorting Montserrat Corominas to the taxi the woman turned to Francis, and said:

"Will you excuse me asking for another favour, Señor?"

"Certainly, Madam," he replied.

"How long will the Bechstein remain in the hall?"

"Probably until midday or a little later. I have told the firm that someone will be here after eleven."

"Would you have any objection to my playing here for an hour to-morrow, Señor Charing?"

"Why don't you come early, say at nine; you could have the use of the piano until the van arrives—or what time are you setting out for Gerona to-morrow, Nicolau?"

## LEAN MEN

"Between two and three."

"I will be here at nine o'clock if you wish, Señora."

"I have pupils during the morning, but I am very grateful, none the less." Her voice was regretful.

"Earlier then? Please do not be offended at my suggestion, nor feel any compunction in accepting. I can be here at seven. I prefer that hour in fact. If I am not here it will be a matter of ease to arrange for the hall to be opened, the building itself is opened early.

"At seven? Is that not too early?"

"Not at all——"

"From seven till ten, then."

"In that case, with your permission I shall be present," answered Francis, "while you play. *Please* do not refuse me."

It was something of an impertinence, an abuse even, he was aware. But the opportunity was too great to be missed. He had intended to rush down himself and make use of the piano, and for that reason had rejected the firm's suggestion of nine o'clock as a suitable hour for collection. He had no music, but he could probably blunder through Opus 110 of Beethoven and he was sure of the Morley transcriptions. Music had suddenly become a vital necessity to him, the mere anticipation of music was excitement and he was prepared to plead with her.

"I beg you. Play what you wish—the Hammerclavier, Opus 101, something of the 48, anything you like, but do not refuse me, *please*."

"No—I shall be pleased," answered Montserrat Corominas gravely.

Then, as Alonso was hovering in the obscurities of the colonnade with Teresa, whom de Rivière would surely be glad to see, he went upstairs and after collecting some writing paper and a few books went out to the Rambla and took a tram to Taulat Street.

## CHAPTER XXII

### RESOLUTION OF DISSONANCE

FRANCIS dropped the letter into the box and went back to the noisy little café near the bridge over the dried-up river. He had left de Rivière's meeting in displeasure, it had been the first time Spanish politics had approximated to that of England, he thought. The careful summary of unimportant details, the enumeration of petty administrative changes which characterizes a speech in defence of a government had wearied him. How ignorant de Rivière really was ; he had not even known of the great lock-out of the agricultural workers at Torrelles, not an hour's drive from this city of Gerona.

"Why doesn't the Government interfere and put a stop to it ? The place is ruined ?" the questioner had shouted, and the minister had been compelled to leave the matter until the chairman had passed a scribbled note to him. He had scored his neat politician's point well enough later. "Let the Duke of Lérida return to Spain, with or without the Bourbon to whom he is so faithful, and we shall see how the Republic will deal with him !" he had concluded, and the simpletons had cheered enough to drive the thought out of their own heads. Yet everyone knew that the Duke had not been the prime mover in that foolhardy attempt of the land-owners to prejudice the Republic in the eyes of the agrarian workers. The lock-out, over impossible demands by the masters, had been declared on April 17th when the permanence of the change was still to be doubted. And then, by reason of pride and embitterment on both sides, the struggle had gone on blindly to the imminent ruin of the district's agriculture.

The vines had not been trimmed, nor the ground harrowed and dressed ; by and by the blight would arrive and the sulphaters would not splash their liquid jade of salvation over

## LEAN MEN

the threatened vines. The lock-out bade fair to convert the rich valley of Torrellas into a trough of putrescence.

The Duke's flight had been dictated by his alleged participation in the monarchist plot in Madrid during the first week of May, which preceded and partly provoked the convent burning; that he had joined his former king in exile was only a rumour; indeed very few aristocrats had possessed that much loyalty to Alfonso, who was little likely to esteem the quality.

But it was not this unwelcome strain in de Rivière which had compelled him to leave the hall. That morning he had gone to the Plaza Real and there met Monserrat Corominas; for two hours she had played, and then finally had commenced the Opus 110 of Beethoven, Sonata No. 31. She had played this with a convincing restraint, its relative ease had not strained her not superlative technique as had the Waldstein. Nevertheless in many points he had differed and had told her so, at her invitation.

"I take the fugue considerably faster than you do, and I make it a little more joyful even than your reading towards the end," he had said, with more emphasis than his diffident choice of words expressed.

"Show me," Señora Corominas had replied, and clumsily he had begun the fugue, carrying it as far as the octave entrance in the bass.

"No, I do not approve, your fugue is a thing of emotional relief, not an intellectual resolution of suffering." There was finality in her judgment, and he had felt the old upsurge of argumentativeness.

"But surely . . . here, let me play the Adagio. I see what you mean, you don't suppose I should make that a thing of harrowing grief, do you?"

"Of course not, but you would make more of the melody than I do, isn't that so?"

"Much more—the melody is *there*, surely it is meant to be made to sing out—you didn't play it with overmuch softening and legato yourself."

"No—perhaps you didn't grasp my reading."

"Oh, come, Señora Corominas, after all, I have the sonata by memory. . . ."

"What difference does that make?"

## RESOLUTION OF DISSONANCE

"Oh, well, it enables me to follow you with precision."

"But it seems you didn't appreciate what I tried to do," she had smiled gravely.

"No?" he had questioned, momentarily unsure of himself.

"To me the spiritual beauty of that moment lies in the superb dissonances, the minute collisions and parting of ways, if you like, between the aria and its harmony; the melodic implications of the harmony, and vice versa, are musically equivalent but never coincide precisely in time. I find my beauty there." She had played the first sentence of the aria in illustration.

How strange he had not seen that, it was completely in line with his own aesthetics, it was that beauty which made him prefer counterpoint, and yet . . . he had reargued his point about the fugue.

"No . . . I cannot adopt your suggestion," Montserrat had summed up her position fairly. "You'll think me extravagant, no doubt, but my conscience says that is how it is to be played. It is my understanding of the work, how I have lived it for years, to follow your reading would be to confuse myself, to spoil it and probably much other music besides. Maybe you are right, it is possible I shall come to see that, one does change, of course, in music especially, but one has to *grow* to a change, the evolution of intellect must not be forced, that way might produce . . . well, a musical disaster."

There had been no need to think more of showing Lydia's programmes to her, as he had tentatively done; everything had been said. Montserrat Corominas did not possess a half of Lydia's technique, but her musical understanding was mature and disciplined. She resisted argument as dangerous exercise, as Lydia would have been wise to do.

The self-accusation of being a cad had been unescapable; he had been hot with shame while he had been writing to Lydia. From egotism, from sheer musical priggishness and incapacity to resist spirited beauty . . . he hammered the point home . . . he had confused this girl, destroyed her sense of beauty at the point when natural ability of a supreme order, possibly executive genius, had cried out for sensitive respect and guidance. The girl's controversial temperament and her need of love . . . how could he know what self-denials and early privations had made her surrender to him,

## LEAN MEN

the first intellect not to yield to her, perhaps the first male to insist upon surrender. And, after all, what did he know of music? If good anything, or the excellent carving of wood or stone, proceeded only from skill with the hammer and the chisel and could never be arrived at by thought, as he believed, how could he expect to know anything of music with his crude skill, stiff and blundering as a worn-out action of organ trackers? Every piece of training he possessed condemned him. There had been a managing engineer in his old firm who had designed a railway station for the system, and had placed the water tanks at the wrong end of the platforms. Any porter might have done better. In a supremely more difficult and important realm, he had nothing but contempt for the amateurs of revolution; what then would this woman have for him if he disclosed Lydia's case to her?

He had written to Lydia from the café where he now sat watching the gypsies cooking their supper on the dry bed of the river . . . having travelled through the glorious Congo without seeing its beauty, thinking of the girl with, as it seemed now, his first real thoughts of love for her.

He had put off this decision for months, he realized, out of sheer cowardice, or at the best, hoping the solution would be clearer with the passing of time. Perhaps it was clearer, but it was humiliating to think that once again it had been chance which had intervened to force a decision. How strange that the intersection of two, three lives should influence a fourth so far away. The eternal mystery of causality again forced itself upon his attention. Well, that episode was closed with the finality of a Bach chorale.

During the return journey he tried to make up his mind about Elizabeth. He found that breaking with Lydia did not irresistibly impel him to return to her. That was not to be wondered at, he knew; it was only a novelistic psychology that could expect that. Their relationships had changed, he felt, but quite how he could not decide. In the days which followed, ceaseless activity in connection with preparations for the Cortes elections prevented him from thinking closely about Elizabeth. She was nearer now, he realized; in some strange way the peace and quiet joy of their early months together seemed to have been re-created in his life, he found indeed that he thought more often of her, and with a kind of

## RESOLUTION OF DISSONANCE

love almost as if he wanted to be her teacher and leader, as Lydia had said he had been. There was no discomfort in thinking of Elizabeth nowadays, at times she almost seemed to have recently been present in the cheerful poverty of Taulat Street, and to have left behind her that afterglow or echo of personality which lingers when someone significant or attractive departs. He often indeed imagined how she would respond to that frugal but joyful life, and pictured her there among them; but then he realized that she would not be speaking Spanish, for she had only been able to muster a few words of the language.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### MERMAID

LIFE in Taulat Street was very happy, largely because of Tía Benita, Lucia Texido's aunt; Lucia's sweetness and affection for everyone received its complement in the hard-headed practicality of Aunt Benita. An aunt only by marriage, she was a Catalan of Catalans, combining the acuteness of the Scot with southern geniality. A thin-faced, grey-headed spinster of fifty-five, she lavished all her affection upon her niece Lucia, the girl's husband Rafael, and latterly Francis and La Roja. What remained over she expended upon Terrina, her tailless cat, a big-headed beast with a loose rattling purr like a worn sewing-machine and the affectionate temper of a scorpion.

Despite her great respect for Alonso, there had been something in her treatment of the Murcian which suggested coldness, but this had recently disappeared and Tía had done her best to advance Alonso's unavailing courtship of Teresa. Mariscal's house, with its exotic comfort, had been alien to the girl's spirit; and having secured a post by the doctor's aid, as a junior assistant at a prenatal clinic, she had taken up residence with the Texidos, her trundle bed and few properties occupying one corner of the enormous barn-like room upstairs.

It was only by this combined economy that they could afford the luxury of living in a separate house. Lucia's pregnancy, troublesome in its course, had made a shift to a ground floor advisable; the sunlight of the wider streets of the suburbs, too, was essential. Taulat Street, more a name than a thoroughfare, lay upon the limits of the city, towards Badalona and bounded the dry delta lands of the straggling Besos river.

From Taulat Street it was possible to gain the sandy beach of the Mediterranean by two ways. The Industrial Revolution which had made London, when all is said and done, a city of

## MERMAID

squalor, and which has ruined the loveliness of innumerable town sites throughout England, has pitifully wasted the glorious site upon which Barcelona stands. Built upon a sandy coast with a curve of mountains behind it, no beach exists proximate to the city. To the north-east especially the waste has been almost tragic. Fine silvery sands stretch out in an arc towards Badalona, upon which the slow swell of the Mediterranean breaks in glittering plumes, unbearably bright in the intense sunlight. And along this beach, shutting off access to it and defiling it with oil and refuse, factories have been built and sewers constructed, so that the only public strip in reach of the citizen is a foul patch of lousy and excremented sand in Barceloneta, upon which in mid-summer there is barely room to stand as the men, women and children of misery seek to refresh themselves by bathing among the flotsam of the beach.

From Taulat Street one might hurry along the canalized banks of one of the little streams whose bed had been utilized as an open sewer, and stooping through arches where the stench made one retch violently, stepping dangerously upon the narrow paving over which lapped the nauseous liquid swirling to the purity of the sea, one might reach El Dorado, the fantastic colony of shacks and cabins built upon the sands within drift of the spray which bursts at its very doors. There can be few sights in Europe so hideous as this colony. There men and women, sick skeletons devoid of flesh, and half-animal children, drag wearily among the filthy erections of refuse which are their homes. Strips of bleached canvas, old motor tyres, metal advertisement plates, discarded bamboo, the jetsam of the beach, pieces of hoarding, corrugated iron, rubble, the dried muck of the sewer, these are the building materials of the beach colony, whose dwellings huddle together so that the street is a narrow path of middens not more than three feet wide between fly-infested caves. Poverty here has ceased to be privation, food is barely known, its noon and night a stupor of drunkenness of methylated spirit, of cheap eau-de-Cologne, of the refuse of distilleries bought from watchmen; fever, malaria and typhus break out continually and are only kept down by the continual purification of the sea air; venereal disease crumbles the bones and eats away the flesh of its inhabitants.

Lucia had shrunk in horror from this part of the beach and

## LEAN MEN

the way of gaining it, and eventually they had tipped the yard foreman of one of the best factories to allow her to use the factory gate on to the beach. This section of the coast was clear and uninhabited, and there the Murcian girl would often sit for hours, alone, or with Tía, her husband or Francis, Teresa or Vilanova when they could find leisure or were engaged upon some clerical task which could be done there. From the men she had learned the names of the types of ships that passed on their way to other ports, especially those of the sailing ships which most pleased her. She could distinguish accurately between the frigates, the bric-barques and the various kinds of brigantine such as the *rodo* and the *galeta*; she knew the *pollacras*, the *paillebots* and *balandras* by their rig, and even the little lateen-sailed *mistics*, *xavecs* and the rare ketches were known to her.

The house on Taulat Street was administered by Tía, without whose pursuing precision the place would have been beyond their means. Her accounts she made up on pieces of paper upon which she scribbled the amount disbursed and thrust into a slotted box throughout the week. She had refused to take more than a proper contribution from Francis, and only permitted him to adjust his conscience by accepting the gifts to the pantry which his superior means allowed him to make.

Teresa took her midday meal at the clinic, which she loved with her usual fusion of doctrinaire devotion and natural liking for the work. Mariscal had given her several excellent manuals on pre- and postnatal care, and repeatedly took her rounds the wards of the maternity hospitals; she was attending a course of dietary lectures at the university and had bought herself one or two books upon the general physiology of sex. By these means she was striving to make good her lack of training. There was no doubt about her success, the question was whether the girl's health would stand the strain of her continual activity. Her seven hours at the clinic were supplemented by long hours of Party work in connection with the Centre, in study or in agitation among the girls of the coastal factories, a work which was unexpectedly beginning to give results.

When Lucia had suggested that La Roja should be invited to share the house, Francis had had doubts about the wisdom

## MERMAID

of his continued presence at Taulat Street. That she was devoted to him was obvious, but whether with sufficient normality to make her unhappy in permanent contact with him he did not know. She had refused every suitor which her rare individuality of being an intelligent woman had ensured her at the Centre. Perhaps a score had approached her. She had rebuffed Elipe who had one day abruptly asked her to marry him after a brief one-sided courtship by letter and clumsy attention, and after giving her refusal had told him that she loved another man. Her liking for Charing's company had impelled the strong man to ask Francis to declare himself. She refused Alonso's proffered love without breaking with him, but showed most liking for Francis. She never missed an opportunity of time with him. She insisted upon a verbal agreement in this matter, she would repair his clothes and attend to such needs in return for instruction and the loan of books, and this was really to satisfy her conscience for taking so much of his time, though she professed it to be a bargain. At her request he had undertaken to teach her to write; she desired to be a propagandist for the movement. He devised a course in essay and précis writing for her, the combination of enthusiasm and somewhat unhispanic principles of writing which he taught her had already produced remarkable results. Save for their limited vocabulary, her articles for the Bulletin read almost like essays by Azorin in their utter directness and precision of atmosphere.

For his part this friendship was a thing of joy. The nights when she asked him to come to her room were filled with a deep contentment, the complement of the subtle alertness he felt with Montserrat Corominas, who had given him leave to call at his pleasure, although after all she had asked to be released from her promise to play with Ricardo Trepas.

Texido and he had soon built her a little partition in one corner of the huge loft-like room, so that its draughty unfriendliness should be excluded, and in one end of this she arranged her "study," a small table, a backless chair and a box lifted from the docks to contain her books.

She placed the fullest trust in him. One night when he had been a little depressed he had worked at her exercises until one o'clock in order to be with her.

"Go outside a minute, dear," she had said quietly at last.

## LEAN MEN

"No, just turn round and look at a book for a minute," and she had undressed and got into bed while he turned the leaves of a book and then they had continued to talk for another hour, till she grew drowsy and he had gone down to his own room.

After that the removal of her shoes was sufficient signal for him to look elsewhere, and to his relief she took to going to bed at an earlier hour. This gave him a new pleasure also, for sometimes when tired she would decline food at supper-time, and this gave him an opportunity to wait on her. Upon the first occasion when he had gone down and asked Tía for a plate of food and a glass of wine for Teresa, the shrewd Benita had narrowed her eyes at him and then followed him into the passage.

"It's for the girl?" Tía had asked.

"She's in bed," Francis had replied at once.

"Francis—there's danger in this."

"No, there's no danger." His answer had again been prompt.

"It's not sin, man, it's just the occasion of sin." Tía had continued, disclosing what he had suspected, that the catholic casuistry and philosophy still fragmentarily persisted in her mind besides the few external relics of piety that caused so much comment in Taulat Street.

"No, Tía, there can be no occasion of sin in a situation in which no sin has occurred, nor in which there is no temptation." Tía had thought a while and then answered him with a pat on his shoulder.

"You're right—I remember now. But still, be careful, Francis, you are a man and she is a woman." The world outside of casuistry spoke in her final warning. Lucia when told had merely chaffed him, though she never professed revolutionary doctrines and had not entered into practical politics. Tex's indifference seemed to contain an element of displeasure, but he made no remark to betray this.

This waiting upon her gave him a distinct glow of happiness, impressed with its own unique quality. It was very definitely a form of love for her, he felt, yet barely a personal love. That it was natural enough in its origin, he knew, for the sight of the cleft of her breast through the neck of her nightdress was pleasing: it made him want to sing, just as the appearance of her foot from beneath the sheets had once

## MERMAID

absurdly made him take hold of the guitar he had bought, a cheap factory product by Telesforo Julve, upon which he had struck the opening rhythm of a Petenera, which worldly affair he had promptly suppressed for a delicious set of variations by the eighteenth-century Sors, faint and suggested music of the utmost spirituality. It was her foot that had once aroused fire in him, he had remembered, with the fullest perception of the sharp contrast in response.

Teresa never referred openly to that strange night upon the peak of Sant Llorenç though he knew she wished to keep its memory alive. In her drawer were many pictures and photographs of the mountain to which she continually added newly purchased ones. Neither did he wish to forget, a trick of imagination even secured greater prominence for its imagery; the mountain's image seemed progressively to grow in height. Its three or four thousand feet gradually became doubled, trebled, till his image re-enacted the event upon the summit of a great rocky peak whose dark sides mysteriously gathered snow from the night, for his mountain knowledge added the consequences of height to the image. Even the building seemed to disappear, and he saw Teresa's body gleaming with the ideal beauty of memory upon a bare peak beneath a glacier moon that threatened to become a sun.

Once she had made an oblique reference to that night on the peak. Sometimes she would go with him to a little stretch of beach beyond the Besos mouth, to which they gained access by sprinting across the railway bridge. There, in the early hours of the morning, Francis would bathe in the purer waters away from the city's defilement. One morning he had swum some eighty to a hundred yards out to sea when, turning, he saw the girl walking down to the beach to the sea, not even covering herself with his towel which she carried in her hand. He had swum in and awaited her, treading water at a distance of fifteen yards from the shore.

"I can't swim, Francis," she had shouted, and he emerged from the water and led her into the waves. She had pressed close to him as the incoming breakers pushed against her, and then as she had lost her footing he had gathered her up in his arms and tenderly gazed at her dripping body.

"Am I beautiful by sunlight, too, Francis?" she had laughed joyfully.

## LEAN MEN

"More beautiful—especially with the water running over you, you glisten so!" he had said, dipping the clinging girl into the rushing foam. They had both been excitedly happy as they ran back hand in hand across the bridge.

One misgiving at times perplexed Francis. He was a little hurt that Alonso never appeared to wish to confide in him; moreover, the ensuing talk would have cleared up several points of doubt. It was evident to them all that the Murcian was deeply in love with Teresa, and quite as clear that she did not return that love.

It was not only that he wished to assure Alonso that his friendship with the girl carried no intention of love; he longed to be able to advance the docker's suit. Also, was it possible that this spiritualization of the girl's instincts was preventing her from loving Alonso? The pair would have been perfectly matched. It was unthinkable that the rarity of her individuality should be yoked to any other in their movement.

Perhaps it was no fault of his; after all, she might be too busy to form new affections, or perhaps her distress at her brother Gerard's continued illness of mind inhibited love. All this he wished to explain to Alonso, but the poet never gave him opportunity. Provisionally he had thought of a way of bringing the two together more often; the plan, a simple one, only needed Alonso's consent.

This Sunday morning he had spent in limewashing the dining-room. Lucia had taken the fancy of wishing to have it coloured light blue, and though Tia at first vetoed the idea because of its expense, she had afterwards given Rafael seven pesetas for the purchase of wash. Alonso had now taken a seat in the corner of the fresh smelling room while yet Francis was finishing a patch above the garden door. Apart from chaff the Murcian had not spoken to him all the morning, being occupied with a profusion of manuscript sheets and odds and ends of paper. Soon the others would be arriving for the celebration dinner Tia and her niece were preparing in the ill-equipped kitchen.

Then, as he was about to climb down from the ladder, the Murcian called him by name.

"Like apples?" asked Alonso, squinting at the paper lying before him on Texido's tiny writing-desk.

"Do I like apples? You sit there and ask an Englishman

## MERMAID

in the midst of a Spanish July, with his mouth full of lime-wash, whether he likes apples ! Torturer."

" I have some good ones."

" Nonsense, there are no good apples in Spain."

" There are now, the best French eating apples."

" I prefer English."

" Well, then, these are English, grown in Spain. Have a look at this." The Murcian held the sheet of paper up to Francis perched on the top of the long step-ladder. The poem was called :

### *Red Apples*

*Red apples in a sunlit tree,  
A wind to shake the leaves to flame  
Comes a wandering bee ;  
A thrush to give the place a name  
And take my right of song from me.*

*Red apples in a sunlit tree . . .  
Ah, hush, what use can singing be ?*

" You're not a man but an anecdote," exclaimed Charing. " Out of prison yesterday, and you write this to-day. Any more ? "

" Bushels of 'em, all nice and rosy. Careful with that bucket, man, or you'll drop it on Mrs. Tesh."

" What's that ? " Lucia Texido pattered back from the smoky kitchen supporting her swollen belly.

" See this, girl, no need to run up to the market, Alonso produces the dessert, there's pumpkins, pears and grapes in the larder."

" Grapes, yes, I've fudged up one about some grapes," admitted the docker.

" It's for me, Alonso ? " queried Lucia, opening her eyes widely. She went over to the writing-desk and pulled his ear, " For me ? "

" Sure, girl, there's lots more." He thrust his fingers under the papers and lifted them up and spilled them over the table. Among friends the Murcian was openly boastful of his fecundity. The way to write one good poem was to reel off a hundred, according to his theory.



## LEAN MEN

"What gave you the idea?" Francis asked, climbing down the ladder. "This isn't the right time of the year for red apples."

"Jesus! You don't write about what you see in front of you."

"I wish you did sometimes, son. Now don't be a jackass and take me wrongly, you know quite well what I mean."

"Those harbour poems? I know—but that's got to be big stuff, Francis. I'm going about working that auto-suggestion stunt. I'm getting better every day, see? I'll do them, but when I've got the hang of it. Careful, man! Jump!"

The bucket toppled down with a dull thud and a splash and its blue-tinted contents rippled over the red-tiled floor of Texido's living-room.

Lucia began to scold them. "What a mess, Martínez, you ought to have stayed in prison."

"Fetch Isidro in, he's doing no good mattocking round there among the cabbage stumps," said Alonso. "Don Quijote and the wine sacks, look at him, worse still—Sancho Panza imitating his master. Hey you, Caliban, come here! Lap that up!" he ordered when the dwarf had entered.

"All right, big trap," mumbled Isidro. "Why don't you shut your face over some of it," and went off to the shed at the bottom of the garden for another bucket and mop.

They went outside to the awning under which Lucia and Tía Benita had laid the table, Alonso bringing his manuscripts with him.

"Any cigarettes, Francis? You put on your pipe, there's a good chap, it keeps the flies away," said the docker. "Now listen. I'm going to make a book of them and I want your help."

"Yes? What kind of help, want to use up all my paper too? Ten sheets to a stanza is about your consumption, isn't it?"

"Tesh won't mind. Have a look through some of these and chuck out the duds. Will you?"

"My dear poet, haven't I told you I'm no judge—or at least that you are as good?"

"Many times, many, many times, but I don't like any of them very much, though I love 'em all. That's the form the trouble takes, brother. You see, I've thought of writing the

## MERMAID

rusticity out of my blood. I've been here years smelling gasoline and hoisting sacks, but whenever I sit down to write its trees I see, poplars especially, or cork and olive trees and prickly oaks; prickly oaks are the very devil to get into verse, too. Or it's a bridge back at Archivel where we used to chin the girls below at the washing pool, or fields with the dust of wagon wheels puffing over them—here, give me some paper. Say, have you ever noticed how wagon wheels go rattling up the stones of the olive field paths and then go silent as they launch into the soft dusty earth of the field. That's an idea for a verse, see? As I was saying, back in Genesis, I'm going to compile a book, to be called *Pueblo*. It's going to be the complete 'Little Town' the whole town, *my* town and some others I've visited, besides a large number of those I haven't, nor anyone. Fountains, paths, town hall, church, weather-cock, smithy, tavern, tavernkeeper, the olivar, vineyard, the priest . . . lovely one we had, couldn't abide the sight of a mule . . . the mad widow—sure, boy, fields, pastures, ploughs, everything in the town that lives and happens, the town songs—say, what an idea for a poet! Labour songs, dancing songs. . . ."

"Love songs?"

"Ye-e-s, love songs, every sort and species of song, especially ribald ones, fine one about the priest and the mule, blasphemies . . . plenty . . . lies, jokes, the complete outfit. I'm going to work it right out of my system, or right in, perhaps; in which case I shall go pluck me a simple flower from the hedgerow, it's cactus down our way, gird me with a sheepskin, and Spain will be shot of another promising Red. That's only a joke, by the way. You'll find the same, some day, if ever you try to write. Perhaps you'll be in England—you'll have the devil's own job to write Spain out of your blood. Anyway, I only want to do this so that I can start on 'The City.' That's where your dock poems come in. 'His sky-blue English eyes with sweat were blind, His English blood the trampled decks did dapple, He cried with the only rhyme that I can find, My Spanish job for one sweet English apple!' What do you think of my idea?"

"Well, I shall buy your book."

"You won't. I'm going to burn the damn lot and do some serious work. There's a fine plot for a revolutionary play I've

## LEAN MEN

hought of, it's to be called 'The Sickle,' and the City Poems are going to be *real*, the whole city, every mortal thing and if here were anything immortal I'd be on that, too, like a long dog. I can't start yet because Pueblo and the City are at war with one another. There were white doves at home, they used to perch on the cardinal points of the weathervane, an old boy who lived in a house above the ford steps—retired gentleman he was—had a crucifix and a brass statue of a naked girl on his table in the window—he kept the girl polished, too; under the ivy of the arch over the Hundred Steps was a carving of a boy's head, there were six olive trees on the brink of a cliff below the sanctuary of Saint Blas and a fountain that ran salt and a waste patch of stones. What could you want better than a waste patch of stones? A poet shouldn't ask for bread, though that's a damn good idea, too."

"Nothing could be better, I feel stirred at the thought of stones."

"How's that—I call it the Alizar, that's its name down our way."

Francis took the sheets from the Murcian.

### *The Alizar*

#### 1

*Between the Gate of the Ox  
and the Bluff of the Crows,  
the Dry Rift and the Gallow Pines,  
the harsh land  
the Waste of Stones.*

*Disvirgined and vitreous slags  
red cements stuck with bruised pebbles,  
strewn with lustreless grits  
littered with veined blocks,  
gullied, trenched, contorted, guttered, jagged.*

*Over it light is a nightmare of perpetual noon.*

*Rebounding rains  
spill from the hard pocked slabs  
lifelessly naked as lust  
into bottomless fissures.*

## MERMAID

*Not even the glossy kids stay long  
nor the hawk long hovers.  
Lizards flicker  
the serpent worms among the stones  
dull-skinned and sluggish.*

*What heart it has  
what longing for song  
bursts into the flesh-shredding, nerve-severing, blood-spilling*

*Beauty of the Cactus  
that hideous green sadist  
lacerating the white body of the light,  
that searing lyric of venomous frustration*

### II

*The moonlight that lies on the sleeping hill  
with the aloofness of a cold lover*

*The moonlight that barely steps down into the valley  
like a lady disdainful of a poor house*

*The moonlight that shrinks from entering the forest  
like a timid tip-toeing girl*

*softly caresses the anguished stones of the altar,  
soothing his pain  
with the deep, breathing grace of a mother.*

“ I like 'em with rhymes, myself, but I'm writing them all ways, just for fun, though this free sort is too damned difficult for me as yet. It's just moonshine about that forest, Francis, there isn't a decent clump for miles around Archivel, but I put it in as a kind of poetical aspiration. I hit on the idea going across the parade ground down by the barracks the other day. Here's one with rhymes, you'll be saying it's not the month for cherry blossoms, nor for cherries, though when I started on that it was. I can't find a title and don't look for a lake among our hills, boy, there isn't one. The tree in question

## LEAN MEN

used to hang over the Marquis of Peral's carp pond, and besides lilies there was a hell of a lot of scum. In fact, it stank. I supposed I ought to make 'stank' rhyme with 'tank' and tell the truth, eh? There's plenty doing that just now by what I read in the magazines, though. Have you ever noticed the shape of cherry blossom, by the way?"

The poem, in an unusual stanza, was written on the back of a telegram form and read :

*The cherry tree that lamps the lake  
Over the young reeds' level paling leans.  
The lily leaves untrembled take  
What silver offertory the bare boughs make.*

*I see how cherry bloom has now  
That shape black fruit in later months will have,  
The lilies' raft will dip its prow  
Beneath plump alms-rain of the green-leafed bough.*

The last line had originally read "Beneath ripe alms-rain."

"I like 'plump' better because it gives the sound of a cherry dropping on to a leaf or into water, clever boy that I am," explained the Murcian. "Oh Jesus, think of it, a hot-headed Bolshevik whiles away time waiting for revolution writing about dropping cherries. I suppose you really think it's immoral to write this trash when I ought to be writing for the movement, or about real life. Don't you ever feel puzzled about what goes on in your brain, Francis?"

"Much the same occurs to me, *chico*. I like music, I can't live happily without it, yet if I start to sing I can only express myself in Gregorian chant, horribly falsified, of course. If I begin by extemporizing an aubade I'm sure to drift into plain song before I get far."

"Good Lord, and Tesh and I thought it was English 'cante hondo.' We talk you over a lot, you know. Why do you laugh?"

"Oh nothing. Tesh and I talk you over a lot, that's all."

"You do? *Que aproveche*. Say, have you ever noticed how similar some of the cabaret flamenco songs are to church stuff; both 'songs of the depths' I suppose."

"H'm, superficial resemblance of scales . . . another

## MERMAID

instance of what we were discussing occurs to me. There's no more religion in me than sticks and stones, or streams and trees."

"Streams and trees, they move."

"Right, then, yet when I'm at home, if anyone sings Christmas carols, I'm bound to stand and listen. I'm not much puzzled about it, though."

"Streams and trees," declaimed Alonso. "You know boy, if they were ugly they might have a religion. I always feel more like praying if I see an old slate quarry or anything so bloody mournful. Out of all that wilderness of hills down our way there were just one or two turn blue with rosemary in the early spring, and that was always the end of my winter religion. A kind of fat I used to lay up under my skin; bit of a bear, I suppose."

"There used to be a religion about streams and trees, please don't resuscitate it, at least not in your verse."

"I know, unsatisfactory affair, mystic rites on a dewy bank or in some sacred oak grove. Drive the pigs out the day before, I expect, and call it sacred on Sundays."

"Or naiads and dryads!"

"Rather better. On the whole I think that was a happier religion than ours. More worship and less thought of sin, more fun, too. Yes, I think the Greeks were happier, Mediterranean stock unspoiled. You know, I sometimes wonder whether I'm really a Latin, Francis, or whether this Latin blood stuff is just bunk, though I wish Rubén Darío hadn't written those lines about oil and wine. I covet them myself."

"A Latin sacrament then, oil and wine. Rock makes a stout altar, good against thunderbolts."

"Darío says 'in rock and oil and wine I feel my antiquity.' That involves the best definition of a Latin I know. Get it well into your bean, it'll save you a lot of sociological chatter. Besides that, the whole thing is a mermaid."

"Difficult to grasp your mermaid, Alonso."

"That's because you're not a Latin. Now tell me, isn't it true your English mermaids have only one tail?"

"With combs and mirrors in their hands, that is the tradition."

"Now then, what do you think an amorous seaman could

## LEAN MEN

do with a creature like that? Her very anatomy would puzzle him, even if the cold water hadn't cooled his blood."

"Then Latin mermaids have two tails?"

"Naturally, look at all the old Italian paintings, there's one in the gallery here, there was an early printing house of Tortosa which used the mermaid as its house sign. Everything proves that in all serious respects the mermaid embodies all womanly delights."

"Good Lord, now you mention it, I remember there is a 'Return of Ulysses' by Pintorrichio in our National Gallery at home. A couple or so of mermaids are sculling about on the surface of the water holding a tail in each hand."

"There you are, I can think of more alluring attitudes, though. But see what you Puritans have made of one of God's loveliest creatures!"

"Mermaids, wayside altars and dryads, then."

"Yes, I'm agreeable. But what a lot of bosh we're talking, Francis. I used to like talking about sex, until I fell in love with poetry. They'll ring that damn bell's neck!"

"There's your Latinity again, you get over the ditch between sex and love with a jumping pole of one sentence."

"At one time I should have said the real Latinity consists in not seeing the ditch. But you don't really fall in love with poetry."

"What a voice Pere has! That's like you, Alonso, you've shirked telling me all about it for over four months and now you clear decks just when I can't take you on. Tell me when the others have gone, *chico*."

"Tell you what?"

"Do you think I can't see it, or that Tesh can't, or Mrs. Tesh, or Caliban yonder?"

"Mrs. Tesh!"

"Notice where she tells you to sit at table."

"Francis. I'm . . . I'm deadly serious about her."

"I know."

"Martinez, these señores are also gaelbirds," Lucia lifted the *persiana* hanging in the doorway; Pere Camps and Vilanova stood behind her. "Perhaps they are friends of yours."

"Sure, we shared the same hymn-book. Where's Rafael?"

"He's coming along with La Roja," answered Vilanova; "he prefers Catalans." Lucia tried to box his ears.

## MERMAID

"What about Gerard?"

"I don't think he'll turn up, he's down at the library working on that scheme of his." Pere spoke sadly. "Elipe won't turn up either."

"Pity. Oh well . . . the criminals are all here."

The dinner party at Texido's had been arranged to celebrate the early release from prison of Vilanova, Pere Camps and Alonso. There was something of a mystery about this release which none of them had quite fathomed.

On the preceding Monday they had been arrested by the Civil Governor's agents while addressing an unemployed meeting. The new Governor, Señor Carlos Esplá, had at once engaged in an unwearying struggle to disperse the growing clouds of revolt, his first act having been to expel Andre Marty, the French communist. On the Tuesday a paragraph had appeared in all the papers to the effect that the preceding day three agitators had been arrested while addressing a meeting of "unemployed." The antecedents of these three had been examined and it was found that not only had none of them ever worked, but that they were all habitual criminal delinquents. The paragraph had concluded with an appeal to the working class of Barcelona not to heed such agitators. There being no unemployment relief in Spain, the unemployed were to be feared instead of despised. On their part they had not grown shamefaced with taking their actuarial rights and were therefore in the temper for rebellion.

There had been an immediate collection at the Centre; the lawyer they had hired reported that in consequence of the fact that the three were wanted by the normal jurisdiction they had been transferred to the city police. Everyone had been filled with apprehension; at the best they could not hope for the trio's release for some time, perhaps months. The slowly moving procedure of Spanish law (an ordinary civil suit rarely took less than two years to pass through the courts) while fairly expeditious in the treatment of political prisoners, dismissed such hopes. Besides, the police would either have to investigate the prisoners' lives closely enough to unearth an offence, or spend a certain amount of time fitting in the details of an invented one in a sufficiently decent way, so as not to horrify the public conscience. Supposing Police Chief Menendez's attempt to reform the police force to have been successful,



## LEAN MEN

there was still the interminable procedure of defence to be gone through. It was often far quicker to plead guilty, serve the sentence and emerge a convicted but free man, than to defend oneself, be acquitted and sally forth perhaps ruined in health and mind by lengthy incarceration.

Alonso had insisted on defence, Vianova and Pere had reluctantly consented to stand with him, and they had all settled down to the melancholy conviction that the three would be long absent. And then to everyone's complete bewilderment they had been suddenly released on Saturday evening, and had emerged from the Model to find Isidro and a friend of the dead weaver Arolas, awaiting them at the gate, with a dinner already ordered at a neighbouring restaurant.

The affair was still a mystery to them. Alonso had twice closely questioned the dwarf as to how they had known they were to be released at that hour. Isidro persisted in replying with the exclamation first proffered by the friend of Aroias.

"We went to the Model with a basket of food for your week-end meals and they told us you would be coming out at seven o'clock, so we fixed up a little dinner and waited."

At first hearing this had been plausible, for it was often the case that a prisoner's relatives or friends would supplement the meagre prison diet with delicacies. The humane administration of the law permitted the Christian charity of succouring the oppressed. But the two would not have been so green as to leave the basket with the porter, they would surely have asked for access to the office to obtain a receipt from the kitchen master. It was extremely improbable that in the quartermaster's office they would have known when Alonso was to be liberated, though the ever-current jest was that they knew sometimes weeks beforehand when a large batch of fresh prisoners could be expected. Besides, the waiter had distinctly said to Isidro, "the table in the corner, Señor, the same one that we prepared last night." When the affair had blown over Alonso meant to probe into the mystery.

The bell rang and the late-comers' voices were heard in the passage. Tía Benita pulled up the *persiana* by its cord and fastened it in that position.

"Now then, evil-doers, you are all to sit down at the table at once. No nonsense, the girl is already tired, her condition won't stand too much."

## MERMAID

There was a rush for the pile of chairs standing on the old onion bed.

"Shorty, take your mattock and this heap of cabbage stumps away," shouted the Murcian.

"Wonder you haven't eaten them, donkey," retorted the dwarf with unexpected cheerfulness. Tia was ordering the party to their places.

"Vilanova the villain sits there by me, the archangel Rafael there by his wife. Teresa there, where the best serviette is. The tall gentleman with the smiling face takes that chair."

"That's you, Isidro," prompted Francis, sitting down beside Teresa.

"Hola! You sit over here, Assisi, that's Alonso's place," ordered Tia. "Pere, you go over there by the washing tub and drop the plates in when we pass them down, and they're not coals, remember. We've borrowed some from the neighbours, too."

"Well, what did I say?" Francis asked the poet loudly.

"Mystic words," commented Vilanova, looking at the confused Murcian with surprise.

Between the soup and the dish of boiled haricots dressed with olive oil and vinegar, conversation dealt with the counter-revolutionary precautions which the Civil Governor was taking. On the 7th of July Governor Esplá had consulted López Ochoa, the military authority for the area, with the pretext of organizing a labour supply should the threatened strike in the gas and electrical services materialize. As a result, an air squadron was to be stationed outside Barcelona, nominally in order that its technical staff might assist in the direction of power plants. Esplá had also asked for a squadron of torpedo boats to be sent to the port, in this case also announcing that they desired their presence solely because of the technical aid they might afford. There was some talk of fresh artillery being quartered in the city, and machine-gun corps, all of them to assist technically in case of strikes. There was no doubt but that an explosion was nearing. Pere Camps foretold it with enthusiasm.

"Our chance is coming, Francis, opinion is hardening around us, by August we shall be in the thick of the revolution."

"Dafthead," ejaculated Tía. "Haven't you had enough

## LEAN MEN

prison for a while ? All you men are just mad, dreaming about your blessed revolution."

"Tia's a stout old churchwoman," remarked Vilanova. "Give her a mass and the city can be the devil's."

"Vilanova ! Be careful who you're calling a churchwoman," protested Tia Benita. "Just because I don't want to blow Uncle Tom's head off that's no reason why you should think I traipse round after the clergy."

Tia always grew heated over the accusation. She had not been to mass for a dozen years, according to Lucia, and yet upon the first day of his taking up residence with Texido, the Murcian girl had beckoned to him from the doorway of Tia's bedroom, a tiny windowless cubicle, loftier than it was long. "Francis," she had whispered, though Tia was at the weaving mill, at which she was a stitcher's charge-hand, "you must try not to upset Tia about this, I am showing it to you now before you discover it yourself." By the side of the bed, upon a little erection of wood, stood a statue of the Virgin with a child in her arms, and before it a little lamp of the kind in which night-lights are used. In the lamp bowl was a small electric globe which barely cast its feeble light over the statue. "That burns night and day, she even sleeps with it on," Lucia had whispered. "It's best not to mention it, she's touchy."

He had shortly noticed that Tia possessed no other public piety of any kind ; she would listen to the most ribald scandal against the clergy and could even recount her own anecdotes.

An earnest republican, she strongly resented any implication of clericalism or communism. Though she denied that she subscribed to the journal, every month she received the organ of the Grotto of Lourdes which the press bureau of that enterprise issued in Spanish. Neither her copy nor Lucia's, for both of them had once visited the shrine as part of a three days' charabanc tour over the frontier, was ever opened.

After the meat course of beef cutlets dressed with herbs and fried in olive oil, they once more reverted to this theme. There seemed to be general agreement that the masses were ready for an orderly attempt at revolution. According to Texido they were re-enacting the Russian history of 1917. The spring democratic revolution had failed to justify itself, it had not accomplished anything fundamental. It was indeed true that capitalism was far more secure and steady at that moment than

## MERMAID

it had been for several years, despite the superficial flight of capital from the country.

Various land reforms had been mooted and eventually one would be introduced into the Cortes. Most of these schemes included the expropriation of the great landowners, but as all those likely to be advanced to the realm of parliamentary discussion also contained the principle of compensation in money or bonds, their sheer impracticability would cause them to be ineffectual if passed into law.

So far as the workers of Industrial Catalunya were concerned, the question was only one of how to make revolution. The constant disturbances and the admitted temper of desperation prevailing in Andalusia proved that in an obscurer way the same desire existed in the south. More and more the "three conditions" of Lenin became the basis of discussion.

The three conditions for successful revolution laid down by the Russian leader were :

1. A state of general corruption and decay above.
2. A conviction among the masses that a change would profit them.
3. The existence of a strong party among the masses capable of directing the revolution.

The fulfilment of No. 2 was undeniable. Francis expressed some doubt about the first ; the third they were, in his opinion, totally unable to satisfy. The Centre was not a political party but a nursery for one, also it was confined to the capital. True, the impact of the capital upon political life in Catalunya was enormous, though not comparable to that of Paris on France. But the possibility of sweeping the rest of northern Spain into the directed current of revolution seemed to him remote. Whatever the need, whatever the crisis, the socialists would be sure to oppose the attempt. The very fact that the driving force was coming from Catalunya would probably be sufficient to prevent union. The separatism of the Catalan provinces had provoked animosity even among the working classes. The importunity of Quiñones, who openly threatened Francis with "court martial" and hinted at exposure to the police, was in part a consequence of this division.

The Catalan and Balearic Communist Federation had split off from the official party because of the Third International's

## LEAN MEN

reputed incapacity to understand the Spanish situation; and also, its partisans said, because the Madrid officials of the Party had continually manœuvred against them within the International. It seemed to Francis, however, that the Federation and its offspring, the Workers' and Peasants' Block, a growing power, were quite largely influenced by Catalan nationalism, and profited by deft appeals to it. The two thousand members of the Centre would certainly never have been secured by a political party, let alone one adhering to the International.

Nevertheless, the arguments that the Centre fulfilled Condition Three for Catalunya were really very strongly put forward by Texido. It possessed in some respects a programme, it had both sufficient discipline and a philosophy. Moreover, there was no need of affiliation to the International, desirable as that might eventually be. The impact of the capital would certainly be sufficient for Catalunya; their phenomenal growth proved that the masses were waiting for a new lead. The conclusive arguments, according to Charing, however, were that it was impossible to make revolution in Catalunya alone and that the rest of Spain would not follow, or if it did would hesitate between socialist indecision and anarchist disorder. In addition to this, Francis believed that what was really happening was the separation of the workers into two schools of thought, anarchism and communism. It seemed to him that, as they grew in power, so also the F.A.I. tightened its grip over a section of the working class. The clearest proof of this was the fact that they had never been able to secure control of the Syndicates, practically the whole of whose officials were still anarchists. When the hour of revolution has struck it was criminal to dally, yes, but the justification of an attempt was its success. To sound the call to revolution now would be to see the workers' forces split into two divergent armies in the very face of the enemy.

History does not wait, argued Texido; if at the critical moment the revolutionary forces do not strike, the seizure of power by counter-revolution is automatic. They must get behind the anarchist leaders, the demands of the moment were too great for the slow building up of a party along theoretical lines. It was in effect, the theory of the "street" as opposed to the "workshop." Texido's position, if put to the vote at the Centre, would certainly have proved to be the most popular.

## MERMAID

The political suspense, almost unbearable, would have assured that.

While they were still discussing these points the door bell rang again and Tia, who had been in the act of pouring out sweet Málaga wine for the dessert, answered the call. They heard her exclamation of surprise and repeated invitation, and then after an interval she appeared, leading Gerard Camps by the arm.

"Sit down here by the giant," coaxed Tia. "We've put your dinner on one side in case you should turn up. I'll pop in and get a chair for myself." Gerard sat wearily down and, inclining his head so as not to catch Teresa's eyes, turned to Francis.

"I've brought some letters from the Centre, one of them is marked urgent," he faltered, placing the letters on the edge of the table so that they fell to the ground. He bent down to retrieve them.

They looked significantly at one another. Gerard's condition seemed to be even worse. Pere's scurvy had nearly disappeared under Mariscal's treatment; with Gerard the doctor had totally failed. After his delirium in the library he had suffered a morbid depression which at last had given way to alternating states of queer excitement and tortured fear. The excitements were always about some revolutionary plan or other, the expounding of which seemed to fill him with wild joy. The opposition to these often serious projects invariably sprang from himself, and a day or two later he would riddle the proposal with destructive criticism.

That all this sprang from some abnormal mental condition was evident from the nature of the criticism which followed. He would carry his criticism into the most minute details, pursuing a rejected proposition with morbid persistence, making and remaking a negative point with an even greater wealth of argument than the positive had received.

In private, to Francis and Alonso, he often referred to the murder of the mining foreman, pleading with them for advice. A score of times they had argued with him, trying to demonstrate that his offence was light, that the foreman had been a perjured enemy of justice, a potential murderer stopped in the act, that they had no censure for him, and so forth. At one time he had wanted to offer himself for trial, at others to go

## LEAN MEN

and plead forgiveness from the relations of the dead man, and similar romanticisms. Francis had invented a special theory of ethics to prove that the killing was no crime; this had appeared to give him some comfort, only Gerard had riddled the theory with unanswerable criticisms.

To Pere and Teresa he never spoke of this event, even shunning their company latterly. Gerard's attacks of hysteria were usually followed by wandering forgetfulness, in which he would disappear from the city, usually being found at or returning from some place in the direction of Figols, though not invariably. He had only just returned from such a wandering, exhausted in body and prostrate in mind.

"Don't you want to read the letters?" the sick man asked pleadingly.

"Sure, boy, we'll go down to the shed directly and read them, if Tia's parrot will give us peace, eh?"

"What about this scheme you're working on?" prompted Vilanova. "Is it ready yet?"

"Yes, I've brought it along. This is going to be the saving of the revolution." The voice was alert at once.

"Let's hear it then," invited Vilanova. Camps drew a wad of sketches and maps from his inner pocket and began to push their plates aside.

"Hey, I haven't eaten my fruit," protested Isidro, snatching up his plate.

"Fruit? You haven't got scurvy—push your sleeves back." Pere put his hands beneath the table as Gerard waved his hand to the dwarf.

"Now this," opened Camps, "is to be a Two-Year Plan for the workers' republic in the combined departments of Electricity and Irrigation. I propose that we trap all the waters of the Pyrenees, especially those of Navarra, the Bizcayan hills and the Santander to Bilbao ranges of the Cantabrian chain, into some eight or nine reservoirs in order to irrigate the northern provinces of Castillo and the whole of Aragon. Briefly, these irrigation waters can be made to supply electric power in addition. In my scheme I have made use of all the works at present in progress and have drawn up, so far, five new local projects."

"The water doesn't exist—at least it doesn't in the Pyrenees," interjected Pere.

## MERMAID

"Soria and Logroño will have their produce doubled," continued Gerard without hesitation. "Burgos I have not dealt with yet because the scheme already being put into effect concerns that district. Lérida, however, is to have two new reservoirs at least."

"The Pyrenees don't provide sufficient water," repeated Vilanova.

"Yes they do, it's too seasonal and must be stored, that's all—I've worked on the statistics, and provided we evacuate the Pyrenean regions. . . ."

"Provided what?" ejaculated Alonso.

"Provided we evacuate the Pyrenean regions," repeated Camps pugnaciously, "we can find enough water for the whole of northern Spain."

"You're going to turn everybody out of the Pyrenees, then?" queried Vilanova.

"Agriculturally speaking, yes," assented Gerard. "It's a morbid existence, except for special areas like Urgellet and the Jaca lands. What I propose to do is just to speed up history; the Pyrenean areas have been in process of evacuation for years."

"Have you ever read Costa's *Popular Economy of Spain*?" Francis interposed.

"No. I see we have a copy in the library."

"He made that point about the Pyrenees being a decaying region, about fifty or sixty years ago. Your idea would have the effect of breaking up an over-tenacious survival of the patriarchal family, too!"

"How do you mean?" There was a note of uneasiness in the question.

"You know the patriarchal family still exists in High Aragon, don't you? The whole of the property passes to one nominated heir, not always the eldest son, the rest of the family live in dependence under the same roof, working for infinitesimal wages or none at all, but receiving their keep and perhaps a dowry on marriage. The men may even bring their wives to live under the same roof."

"Yes—the patriarchal family." Camps peered searchingly at Francis.

"He says in his first edition that his experience as an economist teaches him that the Aragon Pyrenees would be



## LEAN MEN

uninhabitable *without* the system of indivisible property. Some years later, after he'd practised as notary at Graus, he added that life is impossible *with* it; owing to the jealousies and hatreds it engenders. He gives the impression that Aragon is one snarling pit of trapped animals."

"No, no—it can't be, the family is the basis of life," muttered Camps. It seemed to Charing as if Gerard were trying to justify his killing of the foreman by insisting on the sacredness of family.

"Well, for my part," remarked Vilanova, "the quicker that kind of family is destroyed, the better. I've heard my father talk about it; there's something similar in High Catalunya."

"Why do you want to destroy the family?" asked Tia sharply.

"We don't," contested Vilanova. "Certain forms of it we do. So does the Church. The modern family is freer than the old, it is founded on civil marriage and the right of divorce. The Church says all that is sin and would prohibit it. If ideas of the family can't be adjusted to suit modern mentalities then the whole conception will die out. The real enemy of the family is the Church. Or again, the modern idea of parenthood demands birth control. That's a sin also, the Church says we must trust to God and the Black Death to keep the numbers down."

"What's the Church to do with me, animal? I asked you a simple question and you drag the Church in." Tia put her arms akimbo and glared at Vilanova.

During Vilanova's remarks Gerard Camps had been growing paler and more abashed, and by the time he had finished the ex-secretary's enthusiasm had entirely disappeared. He stood up trembling and, upsetting a glass of wine over his papers, ignored the possible damage to his maps and continued to whisper to himself about the family. Teresa had risen also, and her evident desire to comfort Gerard seemed to provoke even worse distress in him.

"Gerard, let's go down to the shed and look at these letters, perhaps you'll be able to help me with them," said Francis, taking the sick man by the arm. Camps permitted himself to be led to the stifling shed, where Tia's moulting parrot greeted their approach with screeches.

Camps sat down on the chopping-block and stared at the

## MERMAID

cage while Francis glanced over the letters. One was from Elizabeth and had been sent on from Mar Street. Another was from Prestcott whose ship was now out of commission; others were circulars and requests for speakers and the usual correspondence of a political party. The one marked urgent was in an unfamiliar hand; it had been delivered by messenger apparently, it bore no stamp. He opened it; his heart began to beat rapidly as soon as he caught sight of the mark at the head of the page; the short letter itself was like a fearful blow over the heart. So! He was recalled . . . deprived of his post . . . for that was the only meaning the few sentences instructing him to proceed at once to Moscow could possibly have. There was in the letter apparently unforgeable proof that it was genuine.

There had been a time when the prospect of seeing the Kremlin had been a glorious excitement to him. Now it seemed that its turreted image rose up and shut out the living, throbbing beauty of Spain from his mind. Suddenly the full meaning of his recall penetrated his understanding. It was these men and women he would have to leave. Alonso whose warm and vivid companionship had been dearer to him than any woman's. Texido, Teresa—all of them. The struggle he loved was not something apart from these people, they were the struggle itself, clothed in flesh and blood. He was being asked for an impossible surrender. He might never be able to even revisit Spain, nor to correspond with his friends.

The proper thing to do was to set his papers in order, hand over control of the Centre and proceed at once to Moscow, in a carefree and indifferent manner.

"Who brought this letter, Gerard?" he asked. The Catalan had taken the parrot-cage in his hand and was swinging it to and fro.

"The Madrid fellow," replied Camps dully.

Quiñones! Was this the outcome of some obscure manœuvre between Madrid and the International? Or was it that the International really disapproved of the line he had followed? In that case he would be able to defend himself. It could hardly be that, however, for he had kept them well-informed of his action. No, the fact that Quiñones had brought the letter suggested that the International had been misled by that not very honourable official.

## LEAN MEN

Angry bitterness surged into his thoughts. The proper thing to do, doubtless, was to bow gracefully to that political . . . sneak . . . and to thank him for the delivery of the letter before obeying the International.

"Fly away, go away," said Camps to the parrot which had fluttered out of the cage, the door of which was never fastened. He pushed the furiously pecking bird with his shoe. "Go away!"

Francis returned to the awning and sat down without speaking. The table companions gazed at him intently.

"What's the matter?" asked Texido abruptly.

Should he tell them that he was forced to leave them or should he take time to consider what his course must be? Already the discipline he had learnt had weakened its hold.

"I've received an important letter—I may have to leave Spain at once," he replied.

"Leave Spain!" Alonso repeated in astonishment. "What—for good?"

"Yes."

"No; Francis! That can't be, you can't do that." The Murcian was indignant. "Say, what comes before the revolution? No, I can't argue with you, let somebody else persuade him." The leading docker appealed to Texido, who shook his head in counsel of patience.

Asking to be excused, he entered the house and went up to Teresa's room where he usually wrote his letters, his own being dark and airless.

Half an hour passed by and still he could not decide what to do. Indifferently he interpreted the sounds which entered through the open window. The window did not give on to the garden, but he could tell that Isidro was clowning about there, trying to catch Tía's parrot, as elusive as a rat, although its wings were useless. Then the sound of La Roja's footsteps gave him a momentary comfort.

The girl entered the room and sat upon the bed by his side, and drawing his head toward her she kissed him upon the lips.

"No, I don't love you the same now, Francis—I don't want to make it hard for you. You mustn't think that," she volunteered.

He could think of nothing to say. It seemed even harder

## MERMAID

to leave the city now that the girl had set him at rest about her regard for him.

"Tell me about it, if you like," she said after a while. "Is it a woman?"

"No. . . . I am ordered to Moscow."

"You'll not return?" There was fear in her voice.

"I may not go," he replied with a quickness that surprised him.

"Think first, dear . . . take time to think about it, talk to me if you wish," she whispered to him. "Let Teresa help—let me help you." The sudden lapse into the peasant simplicity of speech did not escape him.

That night, as he lay in bed in his own room, he knew that Alonso's suggestion had been the correct one. The three had sat in the partitioned corner upstairs finding a thousand reasons for doing contradictory things. He had thought of spending the evening with Montserrat Corominas, but Alonso had returned to Taulat Street in the late afternoon.

It would be unwise to make a decision at once, he must see things in their proper perspective, away from contact with the city and its struggle. Alonso had advised him to go away into the country for a few days, and the idea had been the more welcome since he had often wished to revisit the Sierra del Bou, among whose people he had lived so happily with Angela. Certainly many would be gone from Sant Pau, but still its hills and valleys would be familiar, he would be able to wander about with the ease of acquaintance. In that austerity he would be able to resolve his doubts. Perhaps he would be able to write to Elizabeth; her letter lay in his coat pocket on the door, still unopened.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### TORRELLAS CLOISTERS

WHEN Gerard had gone into the next carriage with the old man to meet other *rabassaires*, Francis re-read Elizabeth's letter. Soon after dawn the Catalan had called at Taulat Street, having been told by Alonso, whom he had met late the preceding night, that Francis was going into the country, and had begged to be allowed to join him.

Elizabeth's letter had reassured him about Lydia.

"A few days after I last wrote to you Lydia's agent called to see me," it said; "I ought to say her former agent, for he told me that she had broken with him early in the second half of the season. He saw me talking to her after her last recital and I suppose that made him think I might have some influence with her. You see, Sancho, she cried a bit in the artists' room and sent an attendant for me.

"Dear, it was most comical to see Etherington's distress (her agent). He's about fifty-five or sixty, I should think, and a most remarkable shape. He's like a cone placed on top of a cylinder, with two funny little hands that flap about in front as he speaks. He holds his tiny head well back so that you see the thickness of his spectacles, and walks about, flat-footed, all the time. He seems to worship Lydia. 'Oh, Miss Helston (that's me), I had such hopes, such plans for her, I am sure no one could have done better for her'—all Wigmore Street fell back before his little flippers—'but she is spoiling, ruining it all, oh dear, oh dear, Miss Helston.' He sat down and patted the front of his head, it slopes upwards to a rounded point almost. 'You see, my dear Miss Helston, she knows nothing, absolutely nothing, or rather very little——' I suppose he saw me smile, for he got quite embarrassed. 'She knows so very little, so very little. I mean, so very much for her

## TORRELLAS CLOISTERS

age—so young you know, oh, what an artist she would have been.’ I made him some tea and asked him to play my new piano and I suppose prattled like any young musical hanger-on. I am told it is a *faux pas* to ask a musical agent to play the piano, however. He seemed really to like me. ‘Oh, my dear Miss Helston, this is kind of you, so considerate, you really must talk to her for me.’

“The poor man seemed really upset about her, it wasn’t a case of lost commission, I’m sure, so I promised to speak to her. Well, I’ve a winning tongue, for some things. Dear Mr. Etherington will probably come and upset the tea again shortly. Those hands of his! I’ve a theory about them. He’s grown so used to polite applause—I mean that elegant Wigmore Hall fluttering of the hands—that he’s lost the real management of them. They’ll die right away into vestigial flippers at the fourth general of agential Etheringtons.

“I’ve seen your letter to her, Sancho, you must forgive what I am going to write. What your reasons were, I do not know, I cannot even hope they concern me. For Lydia it was perhaps the best thing that could have happened. You are so intolerant and so uncomfortably able at argument that I think you have upset all her judgments concerning music. Etherington thought the same. ‘I don’t know, Miss Helston, but I’ll swear somebody has been filling her head with non-sense—this change is so sudden. I don’t mean it’s nonsense really—but it’s not her natural bent, just yet. I meant to lead her towards better music—to coax her. To guide her.’ He shooshed the cosy by way of illustration, that’s how he upset the tea. He thinks she’ll become a great Beethoven performer, I gather.

“Lydia and I went for a week-end holiday together and she told me of your decision. Will it hurt your pride if I say she wasn’t terribly upset? I am sure she loved you, she doesn’t want to break with you completely even now. ‘Tell him I’ll come and play to you both when he learns to like my music,’ she said when we agreed to bury you. As a subject of conversation, I mean.

“Francis, I long for a letter from you. Your articles in the *Daily Worker* are appearing again but that’s just the political you. I read your analysis of the class struggle implications in Don Quijote in the *Labour Monthly* also. That was more

## LEAN MEN

nearly you. From this paragraph onwards I shan't call you Sancho any more, though I love that fat little rascal dearly. I have only dipped into that Gorgeous Book, as you know, but I recently re-read that part where Sancho Panza is made governor of the imaginary island. It is a wonderful portrayal of peasant character, no wonder the islanders couldn't tell whether they had a genius or a simpleton for governor. There is such a perfectly truthful mingling of sheer insight and gross stupidity in Sancho's character that one believes in the knight because of the reality of the squire. But then all men are like that.

"Write to me, dear, and soon, for my holidays will be due shortly and I shall be away for three or four weeks. Where I don't know. With love, ELIZABETH."

A postscript read :

"Perhaps it was because I asked you things about yourself that you haven't written. Describe a café or a glass of red wine or a yellow tram for me, like a literary Van Gogh. I shall be happy to receive it."

He decided to write to her without further delay ; he had indeed shirked replying to her question about Angela ; he would halt for an hour on the sierra and describe the view. No, that would be unwise, no one could describe the view from a mountain satisfactorily, perhaps the house at Taulat Street or the orchard . . . but even supposing her request for so simple a thing to have been really sincere, she would want something of Spain. It made him slightly uneasy to think that she might be leaving for her holidays soon and he would not know where to send the letter.

At Gironella, Gerard returned, smiling with something of contentment in his worn face. Francis had been a little anxious for him because in going to Berga they were approaching the scene of the tragedy which had destroyed his peace of mind.

To his surprise Gerard preserved his erect attitude throughout the hour they spent in Berga. From a barber they learned that the revolutionary pressure was rising in the Pyrenean textile city as well, and then before the man could make any

## TORRELLAS CLOISTERS

observations about the neighbouring mining area, he hurried Gerard out of the shop to the plaza whence they took bus to Torrellas.

Once more gloom settled over Camps, as they sped through the silent Torrellas valley. The atmosphere of tragedy permeated even the blaze of sunlight which picked out with morbid intensity every hillock and wall, every white press-house and black tool-cave dotted in the banks of the stepped fields. The sullen olives seemed to mourn with wringing hands, the muddy trickle of water from the untended aqueducts appeared to have grown silent. Since April 15th not a tool had been lifted in the fields of Torrellas; the place was swarming with civil guards and, so they were told, with spies and agents.

During the half-hour they spent in the walled market town of Rio Verde, Francis took the opportunity of revisiting the Collegiate Church.

The sockets of the stonework in the cloisters had been recently cleaned and squared up. Beneath tarpaulins and propped against a chapel wall were pieces of unpainted ironwork; a portable forge stood in the corner of the chapel. On the tarpaulin was gummed a typewritten sheet saying that the ironwork and effects were the property of the associated creditors of G. Trepas, smith, of Barcelona.

The ironwork had wonderful appeal, its stock had been beaten out of the bloom and showed all that naiveté of tooling which constitutes the poetry of early work. Its unpainted surfaces were like living metal in their delicate modulations of plane and texture. The "quality" and the rich warmth of the metal were thrilling to look upon. Had Don Gumersind at last solved the problem of making wrought-iron rust-proof, that these pieces were unpainted? Even the thinnest wash of diluted oil paint would have hidden the exquisite surface of this metal.

Then, passing through the archway that led towards the former Farmery cloisters, Francis found the great chancel *reja* which had been Don Gumersind's constant boast during the months of its passing over the anvil. The glorious piece was not yet finished, probably the smith had meant to work upon it *in situ*. The grille was a magnificent piece of work, though it was easy to see why the *Voice of Rio Verde* had been so



## LEAN MEN

critical of it. The rigour of its thematic idea and its austere development would surely have disappointed popular taste, to which the pinnacle of achievement was the Chiriguieresque, that unstructural degradation of the worst excesses of late French Baroque. The grille was still a compromise, it was clear. It resembled the early sixteenth-century work in its height and general appearance, yet the spindles, which by the Chapter's insistence Trepát had incorporated, reminded Francis of the simple fourteenth-century round bar work of the Barcelona cathedral cloisters. Somehow the work also reminded him of the Juan Bautista Celma's choir grille in Plasencia cathedral, though the vague suggestion of cast-iron which that seventeenth-century piece gave him was entirely absent from Don Gumersind's production.

One persistent failing Trepát House had at last overcome, that of making the crest of a *reja*, as also the overthrow of a gate, a little too light. He had ventured that criticism of the Foronda gate to Don Gumersind, supposing that the rareness of external gates in Spain had deprived him of exemplary work, but the smith had got the better of him in argument. Gates, and for that matter grilles, were originally defensive. Both crest and overthrow must, therefore, be big enough to repel imaginary climbers. The argument had touched off a counter-salvo of negatives. The overthrow of a gate must be large, agreed Don Gumersind, not from any puerile idea of repulsing assault, but because the prototype of gates was the city gate, in the defensive walls such as still surround Torrellas. The overthrow represented the continuance of the wall upwards to its parapet. In that case all the more reason why it should be heavy, Francis had argued. All the Trepát overthrows and crests were heavy, but not over-heavy, Don Gumersind had replied; did he wish Trepát House to crown their grilles with a ferrous circus or a still-life pantomime finale in the manner of Bishop Anaya's tomb in Salamanca Old Cathedral? The ornamental motives of *reja* crests were not fair-booth prizes to be knocked off in three balls, young man; the ideal prototype was a discreet bed of lilies, though it was impossible to adjust that ideal to the more ornate work required to fit later churches.

Besides, the origin of a form in art did not dictate irrefragible laws for its development. That convincing thrust had been

## TORRELLAS CLOISTERS

effected with one of Guillermo's weapons, Francis knew. Nevertheless, the Torrellas grille was finer than anything Trepas House had turned out hitherto. Guillermo, however, had not been satisfied, and in order tactfully to announce his verdict, had asked Don Gumersind whether he could conceive of better gates. The Torrellas gates were only a mere hint of what they might jointly do, declared Señor Trepas. The master grille was yet to come. Guillermo had shook his head slowly. The perfect work in iron would not be achieved in our time, or very improbably. It was impossible, for the reason that both grille and gate were outlived forms, as were most other forms with which they were compelled to deal. The union of perfect craft, refined sense of beauty and achieved utility was necessary for perfection. The craft and the sense of beauty existed, but the ultimate *raison d'être* of gates had disappeared, or was fast disappearing as an article of intellectual faith. The perfect work of art could not be created in a form so undermined by social tendencies, argued Guillermo. Defensive gates were, after all, a pretence. One's best work could not be put into a pretence. Ceremonial piety too was disappearing, had indeed disappeared from the creative world. Unless a new religion appeared, or, since anything better than the Catholic faith was unthinkable, a new liturgy and ritual evolved, the creational urge of worship would sink into lethargy.

Where were your great writers of polyphonic Masses to-day? Trepas House was struggling to create a polyphonic Mass in iron, while neither of them really believed in the Mass. In a very minor way—and Guillermo had even blushed as he spoke—they were the J. S. Bachs of the artistic world. They might create a marvel of design, but their Mass would not be Catholic worship, something would be missing, the sense of exaltation, purity, celestial radiance which filled every passage in Palestrina, Victoria and the early Mass writers, could never be achieved by mere technical excellence aided by artistic probity.

They themselves were like Frenchmen trying to create a great work of art. They had only taste and intelligence to guide them, whereas the greatest art involved something more.

Then Beauty had disappeared with the age of Faith, the

## LEAN MEN

father had burst out. Guillermo had not agreed. Don Gumersind might be held to acknowledge that, he had ventured, by the very fact that he proclaimed himself a mediævalist. No, Trepas senior had countered, it was the early technique and freedom of the craftsman he was seeking to recapture. And then they both had stopped short . . . the subject of business methods had been dangerously near speech.

That argument in Don Gumersind's room had been one of the most illuminating Francis had ever enjoyed. Guillermo had developed his idea that a new set of forms must be given to the artist, whose job was not to evolve them for himself. Such presumption meant queer experiments in external form, futurism, cubism, surrealism and so forth. The needs of society must dictate form, a doctrine now clearly intelligible in one of the lesser arts like theirs, but true of all. Art might lag behind life, it was possible the greatest art was born that way; one thing it could not surely do was to outrun life.

Francis had recently seen an instance of this in political circles. A surrealist artist returned from Paris had delivered a lecture at the headquarters of the Workers' and Peasants' Block. The surrealist, with his keen penetration of conventions, his developed sense of form, could assist the workers in their struggle for freedom by riddling the crude injustice of capitalism with the shafts of his critical art. In proof of this he had exhibited a painting of two goldfish blearily fighting amid a tangle of inky weeds at the bottom of a shapeless bowl, and another of a large-uddered pink cow reclining upon a sofa with a bedpan beneath it in a room whose pictures were turned sideways.

Guillermo had seen clearly that such extravagances were merely escapes from Life, and that great art would never emerge from them, even though art might eventually be surrealist in external form. A new society alone could provide new forms valid for the artist. A new Woman and Child, a new image of suffering or perhaps its exclusion, an image of joy and redemption, all these must be re-created. The sceptics might scoff, but great art would absent itself from Life until Life had created a fresh peak of spirit.

This had been too much for the father, and he had fallen back on the usual terms of Beauty, Form and Technique.

## TORRELLAS CLOISTERS

Guillermo had willingly followed him into these quarters. He had argued that their technique was far greater than that of the early smiths, and was fast rivalling that of the great renaissance workers, Friar Francisco of Salamanca and Master Bartolomé; indeed, given the patronage, they would be found to have surpassed them save in that one matter of "moving the metal along" in repoussé work. That being so, merely to copy the imperfections of the very earliest work would be an affectation. Yet it was these imperfections, and the consequent air of simplicity which they gave, that made early work so much more spiritual than the products of more refined epochs. It might be that the early artists chose to work that way, perceiving some spiritual incongruity in refined tooling; certain it was that their work argued simplicity of mind such as might believe the doctrine of the Fall, the Redemption and the Virgin Birth.

Unless they flung away a large number of the tools evolved by later smiths, they could not hope to produce those vital surfaces in metal. "This," Guillermo had said, holding up a flatter, "is the enemy of piety in ironwork as much as Señor Darwin. The modern tool has chased away Jesus."

Don Gumersind had flinched at the extravagant remark and had only replied: "It's not modern—the renaissance smiths invented the flatter."

This debate had reached no conclusion, Guillermo's prestige as a designer prevented the father dismissing him as a mere theorist; but that is what he really felt, thought Francis.

One thing Guillermo had conceded. The Torrellas *reja* was perfect in its structural qualities, it was built to be part of a piece of architecture, not put together for dexterity's sake. That, he said, was the result of Catalan tradition and the inherent technique which four centuries of smithing had given the Trepats. A sense of form which would come out in anything they might do, as for example, in Ricardo's recent playing of unaccompanied Bach, which had brought him a rapidly-growing fame, and which in its turn had ensured that his nomination for the 'cello professorship of the Conservatoire, already sponsored by a minister, would be successful. Don Gumersind had preserved a straight face at the venturesome remark which the success of his brother's first public recital had emboldened Guillermo to make; Francis had seen,

## LEAN MEN

however, that not even his son's ultimate achievement of the summit of his profession would soften the smith's heart.

The Torrellas grille itself stood here, in an open court of the collegiate buildings, unprotected from possible storms. Two pieces of paper had been fixed, one by the creditors of Don Gumersind, the other by the church authorities claiming the *reja* as theirs.

There was, thought Francis, a certain fitness in the situation of the grille ; it would be too far-fetched to elaborate it ; but there it stood, disputed by the secular and ecclesiastical world, neither of which protected the property contended for, like the whole of life outside the cloisters, open to the intemperate skies. The plight of Rio Verde itself was similar, the frank injustice of the monarchy would have been kinder than the absurd impartiality of the Republic. The Dictatorship would have immediately enforced the masters' demands. Impoverished, the workers of Rio Verde would still have found employment. Now the long-protracted struggle had destroyed the vines, which it would take years to replace ; perhaps in the critical state of the wine industry they would never be replanted. Nor was the impartiality of the Republic beyond question . . . though that was inevitable when at the moment for Revolution, Reform with its cosmetic dabbling stepped in. Rio Verde proclaimed the failure of the Republic, the profound problems of society had not been faced when the union of social forces demanded. The protracted civil warfare and attendant ruin of the Torrellas valley was an image of the whole country, condemned perhaps to another half century of strife because of that defection.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

THE two *pastors*, Xavier and the other whose name he did not know, had pressed the benighted visitors to accept the better of the two litters, and had gone out to see if by chance a goat might be drained of a little milk. They had heard the ring of shod feet upon the stones of the heath. "Hola!" they had cried. "Who goes?"

"Travellers, having lost the path," Francis had called after a second's hesitation. The shepherds hastened with sure feet over the gouged and wrinkled wilderness, and with the profound concern of primitive men for those who get lost in a strange land, had led them gently by the arms to the low cabin of the *Trobada*.

Francis lay beside his companion upon the bed of box shrubs and sheep-skins, listening to the throng of airs that pressed without haste over the *Matorral* towards the distant plain. From time to time the sick man whispered to himself.

A spinning movement of air shuddered into the cabin and fanned the black embers of the fire. A twig burst into flame and subsided; the pulplest fibres of skeleton leaves glowed like minute trains darting about a complicated system of tracks immensely far off across the cavernous interior. He lay watching them until they were consumed and space disappeared.

Shortly afterwards Xavier and his companion, who gave his name as *Pedro Aragués*, returned and relit the fire. Xavier was volubly delighted to have visitors, and maintained a steady flow of courtesy and remarks. *Pedro*, a hired *Aragones* from the *Oroel* range above *Jaca*, spoke in a thick *Castilian* devoid of intonation, but with sincerity. The conversation which followed was really between two men and a voice, for Francis was still abstracted by the beauty of the night and his unusual surroundings.

## LEAN MEN

Almost startled at the sound of his voice, he heard himself questioning the shepherds, and as he spoke consciousness suddenly flew back like a light over the wake of his memory, and he became aware that he had been talking with these men throughout his reflections.

Why was the cabin named the Trobada, the cabin of the Found, and how long had it been built?

Xavier deliberately broke a sprig of box and throw it on the fire, before replying.

"We built the cabin last year, Señor. As for its name, we called it after the old one gone these twenty years. Long ago a goatherd found a sacred image of the Virgin in one of the cracks of Les Esquerdes, behind the cabin."

"They say an earthquake made them," Pedro added.

"It's a famous image, Señor, and you can see it behind the high altar at Castellar, or at least you will be able to when the bishop has been up to consecrate the new church."

"Yes, it's a very famous image," Pedro took over the story. "They took it down to the college church at Torrellas, but it came back in the night every time they took it, so at last the folk saw that she wanted her church to be built at Castellar. That's why they call our church the Church of the Mare de Deu."

It was evident that Xavier believed the story, of which there were countless variants throughout Spain. The sacred Christ of Salardú in the Val d'Aran had been discovered in the act of swimming upstream against the Garonne in full spate; the image of the Cano chapel at El Barco de Avila had returned in the night from Cordoba when stolen by pious natives of that city. There were other crucifixes with progressive morals, which when undraped would allow no woman to gaze upon them.

"No doubt you have a more miraculous saint in your church, Señor," said Pedro deferentially.

"No; I'm afraid not. . . . I saw in the papers the other week that a statue of the Virgin in some town in Logroño had spoken to two children, against the Republic."

"Yes, yes—they were reading it down in the town when I went for rations," replied Xavier. "That was because the new councillors flung the crucifix out of the Town Hall."

Gerard stirred violently on the litter, and Pedro went outside

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

again for a fresh armful of box twigs to give the bed added comfort.

Then after a silence Xavier began to talk again in low tones as if not to disturb him. He was recounting some tale of the Bou, as improbable as that of the Trobada, about events which had taken place in the ravine below, in time long past. The measured and simple phrases of the Folk, hammered clean through years of telling, captured his attention, and Francis raised himself upon one elbow. At his movement, Xavier raised his voice a little and spoke with greater care.

"One day, Joan, heir of the principal family of the valley, was riding home from a visit to the plain, and as he passed through a narrow gate of rocks he saw a water-woman in a wooded pool, colling her hair to the singing of a nightingale. Her dresses were of the flowers called water-stars; a pearl upon her head she placed when she had finished, and very beautiful she was and very kindly she spoke to the heir, who at first was very timid. Encouraged, he begged her love, whereat she smiled in gentle derision.

"But water-women are women, and at last she consented. He stooped, and putting his great red hands into her little armpits, lifted her out of the water, and her two round knees made wet dabs upon his bright riding-breeches.

"Swear," she said with her head upon one side and a coral finger held up. "Swear first you will never call me "Water-lady.""

"I swear it, I will not think that name indeed, my life long, nor anything that might give you displeasure."

"And they were shortly married, and love came to live in the house, true love as happy as village lights upon a calm night. Prosperity too, for the very first year of her presence the grass grew as thick as plush, and so tall and sweet that it might have been stalks of honey. The wheat when it ripened was like red bullrushes, and the barley might have been besom brooms, and as for the maize, it resembled . . ."

"Ramrods of bearded ruby," prompted Pedro.

"... while his cattle were like a cloud of bells moving over Bou.

"And Joan, the farmer now, for the old man had stood back in favour of his son, took to riding about his spreading lands, jesting with his men and slapping his thigh as he rode



## LEAN MEN

off. They made two children, with eyes as pure as pools of water, as he thought to himself, but did not say aloud, for the sound of the word water was a cold sound that made him twitch inside, like . . ."

"Like a strong argument," murmured Camps, sitting up. Francis could feel him trembling violently. So, then, his difficulties were intellectual. The killing of the foreman had not only tortured his conscience but undermined his belief as well. That was the only interpretation that could be placed on the murmured remark.

Xavier was continuing the story, having found no other simile.

"Some years afterwards, it being a day in early May and the sky pure as the blue of a hedge-sparrow's egg and the corn a green fire on the fields, the lady of the house suddenly let out a shrill cry.

"'Apa, minyons,' she cried to the hands, who had dropped their buckets and things and were twisting their necks gazing at her. 'Sickle in hand and reap the corn!'

"Pere and Miquel looked at one another and the straw fell out of Pau's mouth. 'What's this about felling the corn, eh?' But in the end they had no remedy and the sickles flew like whips urged by her tongue, and soon the young corn was limp upon the earth like weeds raked out of a pond . . ."

"Like a lot of draggled tambourine ribbons," added Pedro.

"... Now Joan was aloft upon the crags with his chief shepherd and his cross-eyed boy, cleaning the sheep's feet, when suddenly he stiffened upright.

"'So help me God!' he gasped. 'Down, boy, and see if the king's men have come to destroy us all.' For Castile was on the rampage again, and surely no one else would cut down youthful wheat like that.

"The cross-eyed boy monkeyed down by a tree that he knew, which stood at the end of the ledge they were working upon, and presently came back and after much struggling said: 'It were Pau and Miquel and the lady herself, and Pere a-helping them.'

"Joan raced down the path and rushed from plot to plot. All green, not an ear, not an ear so big as an olive blossom. His anger crackled within like burning broom, and his face was as sour as an old wine-skin as he strode up to the house

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

where his wife stood waiting, smiling with dear love, her head against the door-post, and her dress undone so that her breast showed like a heavy white dove.

“ ‘Thou didst command them to reap? Speak!’

“ ‘Yes, this morning.’

“ ‘Evil done! Evil done! Thou woman of water!’

“ ‘She vanished.’

“And while he stood there a dark cloud formed over the head of the gorge, and a tremendous storm burst, as if the Almighty put his fingers into the cloud like a cracked egg and opened it over the land. The snarling water plunged down the ravine below, sweeping away tree and thicket and field crop of every neighbour in the valley.

“He understood as clearly as if the words had been suddenly written on the flags at his feet. She had known this by the inner sight of water-women, and had already thought of the spell to ripen the reaped corn.”

“She would have made them plant it again, perhaps, and it would have struck root,” ventured Pedro. “Or it would have ripened by itself in the sun.”

“They lifted him up and carried him in and laid him upon the bench near the chimney and stood round gazing at him, till at last he rose to his feet and screamed out like a girl-child and then said quietly:

“ ‘Go, go from here, my servants, for here all joy is ended.’ And they understood and went out from the house, each to his own quarters, and wept, for they had loved her.

“And in the morning he came in from the old rick where he had spent the night, and his little son stood there upon the hearth, dressed, and María, his daughter, her hair already combed.

“ ‘Who dressed you?’ he said wearily.

“ ‘Mother.’

“And he was frozen by the word and could say nothing. And so she came daily, in a dress of water-stars and a fair pearl upon her head and attended to the children’s first needs; daily she left them so that they did not know how she went. Joan lived on in withering hope that she would one day come to him and no more go away. Thus she continued for one year, and at last Joan spoke to his child María, imploring her to help him, and they talked long, and at last she promised

## LEAN MEN

to hold her mother's dress when next she came, while Joan knelt and begged her forgiveness.

"In the morning, standing without the room, he heard the soft cry of 'Mother,' and flung wide the door and stood lightning-stricken upon the threshold of the empty room. She had taken her children of water, too.

"In the cold days that followed he lived alone around the house, not entering within, beneath the ever drooping sky. The winds did not cease to lash the bruised crops, and they withered and fell to the ground. And one wreathing morning, when a flurry of rain ran into the rickyard and beat its thin hands against the walls, he lay back upon the sodden hay and slept and awoke no more. And so with bread and onion my tale is done."

"With bread and onion it's done," repeated Pedro.

When Xavier had finished the tale they all remained silent, the shepherds preparing themselves for sleep. Francis propped himself up on his rucksack and watched the Bear. The story had shaken Gerard terribly, he was crying noiselessly, as he had done on the wharves after the affair with the doctor. Had he not hoped that Camps's reaction to the story might have thrown further light on his distress, he would have interrupted it, despite the discourtesy to the shepherds. This was the explanation, then, of those merciless tides of enthusiasm and despair, of construction and plan and counter-criticism which all his friends had pondered upon so much. Gerard's faith in the movement, in life itself, had been undermined, destroyed by the tragedy of the mine-shaft. He never concerned himself with problems of insurrection, he seemed to leave that to Francis, Texido and the others. It was as if he wished to make some huge creative effort by way of atonement to Life. What realization could it be that invariably drove Gerard to ridicule the plans he himself had prepared?

He had first observed his conduct after the Rodoas's affair, and Alonso had said that Camps always reacted so to violence. The reason for that was now obvious. Could it be that the violence of revolution was so abhorrent to him that to be confronted with even some arbitrary necessity in planning the rebuilding of life was sufficient to destroy his resurrected belief?

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

At first thought this appeared probable, and then Francis remembered that Gerard had boldly embraced the idea of evacuating the Pyrenees. The ruthless uprooting of life which he had envisaged had not daunted him, yet the fact that it would destroy an archaic form of the family had sent the tide of negation swinging over his mind. It might be that the sacredness of the family was a doctrine comforting to Gerard. If the bonds of family came before all else in life, as once they had, then this might lessen the guilt of murder; for Gerard, while shrinking before the impact of the word, always spoke of his act so.

Why then did he refuse contact with Pere and Teresa? His sister's return from Mallorca had provoked in him a similar disturbance to that which Pere's appearance had caused, less profound only because his whole organism had been so enfeebled. It had been impossible for Teresa to nurse him, her presence had made his condition worse.

Upon Francis their present surroundings, and especially the story recounted by Xavier, had had a clarifying effect. Here in the wilderness of the Matorral, upon the mountains of Bou, he had been confronted with the past. That Xavier believed in water-women was evident, strange as it might have appeared had he not lived this life himself. Isolated upon the lonely hills, living in a perpetual austerity of enforced fasts, cut off from the plain by his calling, a vocation older than creeds and preserving in its traditions the simplicity of a vanished world, Xavier was in mind a man of the Middle Ages.

The impossibility of preserving the old beauties and the old values in their present contexts was now even more apparent. To stand midway between the old order and the future was an unthinkable position. The feudal order had been a perfect expression of a finely logical theory of humanity; so the future order must be, would be, equally logical, in its classless structure, in which enormously developed economic power would leave the individual free to develop full richness of personality. For the present blundering anarchy of capitalism, planless, formless, intellectually fraudulent as it was, one thing only could prompt one to its defence, interest. That a church, itself not merely the fine flower but the very life principle of a logical order of society, should in effect blindly

## LEAN MEN

defend capitalism was a sardonic irony of planetary grandeur. The Church had breathed some forbidden word to its bride, Humanity; its own doom was inexorable, though elsewhere the bride and her children would live on.

The story had made more insistent the call of the revolution, and at this time the revolution meant Spain. The intensity of his devotion to the Party had not decreased, but the personal problem he had come to Bou to thrash out had solved itself. For a revolutionary there was only one thing to do: to keep his place in the battle proceeding below. It would perhaps mean expulsion from the Party: well, membership might be regained, but defection from the ranks during the spiritual agony of a nation would be an affront to conscience too serious to live down.

He refused to go to Moscow; the work of the Centre would go on. He felt no bitterness against the Party, corrupt members there would always be in every body; if the International had been misled by such as Quiñones, well then . . . it just made one a little sore.

To-morrow they would go on through the starving village of Puig to Sant Pau, he would visit the house in which their child had been born, talk with old friends, sit in the church porch, loiter awhile in the plaza, drink at the tavern and then go down to the city, eager for fresh struggle.

"Hola! Good day, friend," shouted Pedro from the corral, as Francis stepped through the Trobada entrance. He had waited until the shepherds had gone outside before stirring.

The beauty of the sierra morning was sheer intoxication to him. Above the red and green heaths of the Matorral the buckled slopes of Roig pastures soared upwards to the summit crest of Bou, the whole expanse utterly bare of trees. Every nick and incision in the crest was visible, the blockish shape of the limestone reef that formed the eastern ridge of the Bou Menor was clearly visible. The craggy arêtes and semi-detached pinnacles of the Bou Major stood out with the clarity of stones at the bottom of a granite hill stream. Bou was a magnificent wave of water rising to a white foam of limestone at its crest. A few small clumps of nut bushes stood here and there around the Trobada, their rich brown stems gleaming like sugar-varnished dates; below, in the gorge by

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

which they had mounted, they could see, beyond a wood of cork, thin as a young man's beard, the puffing dust of a plough being drawn by two mules. The austerity of that beauty reminded Francis of the Fourth Symphony of Sibelius, there was nothing at all that might appeal to the sensuous in man.

At seven in the morning Xavier returned from the more distant corral in which the smaller flock spent the night, and they sat round the fire to breakfast.

"Where is the other corral?" asked Francis, passing over a slice of meat.

"At the sag of the col yonder," Pedro replied, handing back a lump of potato omelette. "It's behind the Burnt House, where we used to pass the nights till we built this place. The omelette, sir, is good, though it's a week old. We only go down for food once a week, you see, and to-day is our day for descent."

"How did the house come to be burnt, friend?"

"No man knows, lightning perhaps. Some say the master's enemies did it."

"You used to sleep in it; poor shelter, wasn't it?"

"Poor shelter! It was too wretched for goats. One of the floors had not fallen in at one corner, we flung some old bricks and mortar on top of the planks and there we used to pass the night, among the ruins of the walls. We rebuilt the Trobada early mornings, before we uncorralled the beasts."

"Ah, it's a lonely life," Xavier declared with fervour. "I was main glad when after his father-in-law's death my master sent both flocks up here, for that meant another shepherd."

"He inherited the flocks?"

"Yes, they killed the old man, he was old master Vilaltella, who lived at the Little Palace."

"Oh?"

"Yes, he'd got all the fields of Castellar into his hands except a few and then trouble broke out inside the family. They shot him right enough, though some say it was over the girl, my present master's wife." Xavier referred to what was probably a sordid village crime quite without concern. Fortunately Gerard had not left the cabin.

"Have some of this wine, Pedro." Francis proffered his wine-skin to the Aragonese. "We're drinking all yours."

## LEAN MEN

"No, better drink ours, Señor," said Xavier, shaking his head vigorously. "If we take any back in the *chorro* the master will give us that much less for the future. We always throw it away if we ever have any left over, which is rare. We used to do the same with bread, but Pedro here's taught me a trick I didn't know. I'm not a shepherd bred and born as he is. Santa María, this is good wine! With your leave, Señor, I'll pass it to my friend."

"Of course, what is this trick with bread, then?"

"You tell it, Pedro."

"No, you tell it."

"No, you."

"Man alive, I don't want to bother the Señor with things like that."

"Quite the contrary, Pedro, the more I know about shepherds, the more I want to learn."

"Well, it's not a trick with bread but with sheep. You see, we've got one mixed flock of goats and sheep, which is the Black Boy's own bag of trouble for us. The other flock of sheep only, we turn out on its own, thanks to a little piece of craft my father learnt in Asturias when he shepherded there. You take a great bell, and tie it on to the tamest old ewe. The bell has to be so big that it stops the ewe eating her fill, by getting in the way. Then you train her to eat bread and give it to her regularly about seven or eight in the evening. Do you see, Señor? All you have to do to collect the flock is to go outside and holler out, or make the dog bark. Down they all troop after Granny Big Bell." Both shepherds laughed heartily at Pedro's description of the trick.

"He's a very serpent of wisdom, Señor," chuckled Xavier, winking at Francis.

After breakfast, which apart from the meat they had brought from Castellar, consisted of a fortnight stale bread and the week-old omelette washed down with rancid wine, they sat conversing about the details of shepherd customs until eight o'clock, and then Xavier rose from his stone and said:

"There's no help for it, Señor, much as I regret it, but we shall have to let the animals out."

The two shepherds went over to the corral, Xavier entering by climbing the walls, while Pedro placed himself at the door,

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

which was propped up by a pair of old *trillas*, the heavy, toboggan-like planks set with rows of sharp flints which, dragged round and round by animals, serve to thresh the grain of the Pyrenees. The Aragonese provided himself with two sticks, one stout and the other slender, and then the animals were allowed to leave the corral by ones and twos while Pedro counted, tapping the sheep with the thin and the goats with the thick rod.

"Two hundred and three sheep, thirty-five goats, I make it," said Xavier.

"Two hundred and three and thirty-five it is," confirmed Pedro, unknitting his brows.

"The big stick for the goats, why's that?" asked Francis.

"Friend, I can't count that Black Boy's own community of mixed devils without sticks. If they weren't odd-sized how should I keep the numbers apart? It's natural you should have a big stick for goats, they need it, the devils."

La Raposa and La Sumisa, the two bitches, had already guided the flock into a large hollow and were standing facing their master, waiting for instructions. The smaller flock having already been loosed, Pedro waved his hand in the direction of the gorge head, at the funnel-shaped upper end of which were a few patches of thin barley and scanty pastures of brittle grass. The dogs at once singled out the leaders and drove them towards the gorge, and the whole flock set out at a quick trot along a network of narrow paths.

"How do you train sheep-dogs, Pedro?" asked Francis when they had halted on a little mound below a pine-crowned escarpment.

"How do I train sheep-dogs?" exclaimed Pedro. "Well—wait a minute, Señor, I think I see something white up there on the ground beneath the trees." He drew the hatchet from his belt and chopped his way through the dense tangle of dead pine boughs. "It's all right, Señor," he said on returning. "It's a piece of white rock. I have to be on the lookout, we miss a few sheep occasionally. The vultures eat them up, but we like the skins, if those ugly creatures leave them, of course. We are supposed to hand the skins over to the master."

"You were going to tell me how you train sheep-dogs," prompted Francis.



## LEAN MEN

"How I train sheep-dogs?" A pained expression came into Pedro's eyes. "Well, now, how I train sheep-dogs is this way," he said very slowly and, taking a deep breath, furrowed his brows in thought. Then, suddenly allowing his breath to escape in a huge sigh he said mournfully: "That's something that can't be put into words."

A shout from Xavier, who had taken a lower path with Camps, warned them that something was amiss.

"It's the beasts in the barley," ejaculated Pedro, running to the top of the mound. "Evil generation, you evil generation-a-ation of vipers," he bawled through his cupped hands. "Oh, scorpions, troop of demons, come out of it!" La Raposa plunged into the crop after the animals.

"It's the goats, Señor," explained Pedro, "they lead the sheep wherever their evil fancy takes them. They'd go into the air if there were grass on the clouds. Sheep by themselves are easy work, but with goats! . . . Ah, what an evil generation they are."

At eleven o'clock they had descended to the point where the red cliffs of the gorge first began to emerge like molars from the soil. On the floor of the natural amphitheatre they had entered stood a solitary tower or parapet of rock, about fifty feet high and two feet thick, overgrown with ivy and whitewashed by ravens. Here the flock gathered in the meagre shade of nut and box bushes. Below, a thin stream trickled through red banks towards the narrow trough of the principal rivulet.

Xavier and Camps rejoined them at the tower. Pedro threw down his sheep-skin and the wine-sack, and from his pocket produced a few pieces of wood, a piece of bent steel, a few flints and a scrap of glass-paper. With these tools, and choosing a partly shaped piece, he commenced to fashion a wooden spoon.

"You pass the time that way?" said Francis, looking up from the letter he was writing.

"Yes, Señor, while the flock is resting I always make spoons." He called them *cúcharas*, placing the accent on the first syllable in the Aragonese way. "My wife sells them in the winter when we go down with the flocks to the warm sea-lands."

"You are married then, Pedro?"

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

"Oh, yes, Señor." There was a suggestion of surprise in the shepherd's voice. "My wife Antonia, a good person as ever there was, sells them in Jaca for me."

"What is the price? These are made from boxwood, aren't they?"

"That's right, Señor, I cut it myself from round about here. I charge three halfpence a spoon."

"How many can you make in a day?"

Pedro shut one eye and bunching up his lips, considered a moment.

"We-e-ell, it depends on the weather. On a hot day when the beasts rest a long time, two spoons, on a fresh day perhaps half a spoon. I generally take back about forty spoons in October when I go home to Jaca before setting out for the winter pastures."

"So you only see your wife once a year, then?"

"Twice, Señor. I can just make Jaca and back in the five or six days I get when we return from the sea-lands. I get a day or two at home in October if the passes are not closed by early snow."

"Good God, man," exclaimed Francis. "Do you mean to say you walk from here to Jaca and back in a week?"

"I can do it in five days and nights, Señor," answered the Aragones proudly.

The distance meant a regular forty to fifty miles a day over passes of nine thousand to ten thousand feet through utterly barren and unpopulated land, some of the most difficult in the Pyrenees, and this accomplished on bread, a tiny allowance of sausage and omelette with potatoes.

"Which way do you go, through Andorra?"

"No, Señor, by way of Castellbó to the Rasas pass then from the Pallaresa valley over the Portarron d'Espot to the Ribagorzana. If it's a late year I make the Salanques pass by the Cursed Mountains."

"But that's always snow-covered, man."

"Yes, that's a bad spot, Señor," replied Pedro sadly. "Then by the Gistain pass, there's a shepherd's cabin there on the Pauls and so on, up the Pineta, through the Passet Pujo gap, down to Arazas from the Golis hut, that's an easy way now they've put iron rungs in the cliff above the waterfall. I nearly fell there once. Then I go down to Broto and

## LEAN MEN

over to Biescas by the royal path, that's a king of a path, Señor. Then down to the Gallego river and once there I could nearly run the rest. Do you know how good the sight of the cathedral is when you draw out on the top of the rise above Jaca? Ah, Señor, it's worth it for just the joy of coming out over the skyline and seeing your house before you. I never can wait to take the road, but like a fool go clambering over other people's walls and traipsing across the ploughed lands of the last bit of the rise. All I wish is that my wife and children could come out to meet me, I feel that daftie with wanting to be home."

"Couldn't you write to them?" interposed Francis.

"Yes, I can write, Señor," answered the shepherd with fresh pride. "So can my children, God and the good friars be praised. But what's the use? I do write every time, but I always get there before the letter. You see, Señor, Mrs. Letter has to go down the valleys and round by the plains and have lots of marks stamped on her back while Mr. Aragones goes by the passes and doesn't have to be rubber-stamped at all."

"But man alive, Pedro, why can't you work nearer home? Surely there's plenty of shepherding to be done in Aragon?"

"Ah, you don't understand, friend." The Aragones spoke as if Francis had confessed a fearful heresy. "I get 4½d. a day more here in Catalunya. I make 1/7½d. a day here, and that's not to be sneezed at. A shepherd would never get anywhere near that in Jaca. Of course I could get work, there's a butcher we buy our feast day meat from who makes a little business out of finding shepherds for flockowners and vice versa. He's always telling my wife of jobs, but 1/3d. a day isn't enough to keep my wife and two on. I get my food here, of course. Señor, I will explain my case to you, that you may understand. I have sworn an oath before Saint Peter in Jaca, and I swear it every time the priest slips the Hosi into my mouth, that my son shall not be a shepherd." Pedro's eyes burned wildly as he drew a rosary from his pouch and, kissing the cross fiercely, said: "And so help me God and his Blessed Mother, he shall not suffer this life of tears and sorrow."

They were silent for a minute, the fervour of Pedro's utterance made comment impossible. Xavier continued to nod gently throughout the silence.

## THE OLD ORDER PEERS OUT

Then to the shepherd's bewilderment Gerard groaned loudly, and flung himself face downwards on the grass and commenced to sob.

"He is sick . . . unhappy," explained Francis quietly.

"Poor soul," murmured Pedro to himself and patted Gerard's shoulder.

Francis decided to return to the city at once after lunch. There was nothing left to be decided. He had not written to Elizabeth, but he would do that at the first opportunity.

They said good-bye to Xavier, and then just as they were about to leave Pedro at the corner of the ravine path, where the former mayor of Castellar's horse had shied and flung him into the smooth grave of the dry river forty feet below, Pedro laid his hand upon Charing's shoulder and held up the other to ask for attention.

"Pardon me, Señor, that I touch you. I would like you to accept a little present that I made while we were up at the resting place." Saying which, he took a wooden spoon from his pouch, and holding it by the extreme tips of the fingers of both hands, presented it to Francis and bowed slightly. "For your lady, Señor," he said gravely, "who must be more beautiful than a queen."

The ancient courtesy first delighted Francis and then embarrassed him.

"I have not been too daring, Señor?" Pedro asked with vague apprehension.

"No, Señor . . . *es Vd. muy caballero*." The untranslatable phrase of popular courtesy had never sounded sincere when he had spoken it on other occasions. It was pleasing to say now, there was a fantastic knightliness about the simple action which was too fine ever to be forgotten.

"If the caballero will permit me, I will carve your lady's initial on the handle as I have done with my own."

The shepherd pulled out his spoon by its cord which was attached to his belt and held the handle towards Francis.

"I am not skilled as an engraver, Señor, but I will do my best." He took the spoon which Francis had unconsciously advanced a few inches towards him.

"May I embolden myself so much as to ask what letters I am to carve?" Pedro bowed again as he spoke.

Francis hesitated a moment. What initials should he give?

## LEAN MEN

He had come to no decision about . . . but then so minute an act as this could not demand decision, it was not necessary to explain to himself that his liberty to reflect longer would be jeopardized by so insignificant a thing ; and then he answered :

“ The letters E.H., Señor.”

BOOK IV  
ERUPTION



## CHAPTER XXVI

### ANONYMOUS DEATH

THE whole event was a dream . . . an unreal moon hung low over a shadowy intangible sea that knocked hollowly and glugged among the phantasmal cubes of the breakwater. Even in stretching out his arm and levelling the pistol chest-high at his assailant, Francis felt that the world had lost its reality, the substance had drained out of it. The man in front of him slipped as he bridged the gap between the tilted block of wet concrete by which he had climbed into sight . . . he staggered momentarily, a frond of dark grey foam whisked up from between the blocks, beard-shaped, and licked at the man's legs. The assailant recovered himself and brought his pistol hand sharply to his side, without word or murmur.

Will made its decision. . . .

Down there, yes, between the blocks, a black log-like shape was rocking in the narrow coffin-shaped groove of water, too shallow to bear up its burden . . . he strode over the blocks, jumped down to the lowest level of the breakwater base . . . a cluster of bamboo fishing rods stood up like tail reeds against the purple-black sky . . . those were Matapeix's fishing rods, his brain announced precisely. Scrambling to the first platform of the shadowy breakwater, along which the narrow mining-tram rail was laid, he looked around him hurriedly.

How bright and pointed the stars were above the city, they were like quicksilver over the sea. Where was Matapeix ?

"Matapeix !"

A shout answered from the next gap in the parapet, a crouching form emerged from the slight shelter.

"It's you, Assisi ?"

Francis hurried towards his companion.

"Are you hurt ? Did he get you ?" he gasped.

"No. . . . The Most Holy Virgin be praised . . . missed



## LEAN MEN

to speak to Matapeix. He took three longer strides and drew level. "We're drawing near," his inner voice said; his tongue had strangely swollen and his mouth was too dry for speech, no words issued.

Something seemed to explode in his mind, not violently nor largely, but the awareness of it was so sudden that it resembled an explosion, it was as if a fuse rang from his consciousness to a charge back there by the lighthouse. It was the look on Killfish's face that had touched it off. Before it arrived he knew that something was rushing up out of the dark, something hideous, silent, swift . . . and then overwhelming terror swept over him like an immense wall of uprisen sea, solid, suffocating . . . he flung out a hand and touched Matapeix; the man shied away like a horse.

The wave swept on and left him spinning in a swirl of after-drag, like a piece of flotsam in the wake of a great ship. A noise like the hissing fall of breakers rang in his ears, the pain in his heart and the missed beats were nothing, too far off, and then quietly the hissing sound sank to a chugging glut . . . broken by sharp thwacks of sound like the swish of regurgitated waves, among rocks . . . or concrete blocks.

So. This was what had driven Gerard crazy . . . well, we'll see. The voice within was savagely grim. He felt his will wrenching at his conscience, as if it were the steering wheel of a car. . . . So . . . we'll see, we'll see, he repeated in thought. He strode on, level with Matapeix—Killfish—the verb in the man's self-given nickname was fearful . . . he fiercely checked the desire to race madly ahead.

The girder structure of the New Vulcan workshops loomed up before them, there were stars within its framework.

A feeling akin to proud pleasure grew steadily from a pinpoint of awareness to a definite but precarious confidence. The terror behind was less imperative now.

"Well, what next? They'll be hereabouts if they've been informed."

"We'd better separate," whispered Matapeix, "there's two ways open, drop over the parapet on the sea side on to the rocks, they're quite high here, and then dodge along by the Bathing Company's beach to Atlantida Street, or this way. Shall we toss up?"

## ANONYMOUS DEATH

"No, you go by the beach—I'll chance it by the wharves, I've worked on this side."

"I'm not a docker," Matapeix hastened to say.

"I know, you go by the beach."

The angler scrambled over the parapet, the gleam of wet sand revealed the beach well below . . . he hung a moment, dropped with a suppressed cry, became invisible as he crossed a bar of rocks and then, approaching the beach barrier, advanced slowly like a crab or some black beast out of the sea, climbed the barrier, and was gone.

He was gone! What could that undistinguished man with his queer bubbling enthusiasm for taking fish out of the water and his pride in a nickname do for him? Francis did not know, yet he was gone! He had climbed over the barrier, out of sight, beyond recall. For a moment he was tempted to follow Matapeix, he could shout to him from the top of the barrier.

But what could the angler do to help him? That simple uncomplex mind. . . . Even before the comparison had taken form his sense of loneliness became deeper, what would he not give to exchange places with such a man as Matapeix! To sit upon sunny evenings on his crazy seat of packing-case timber cemented into that block upon which he had painted his nickname with tar. Perhaps the petty theft of tar was the extent of his venality in life . . . to sit before the singing blue of the Middle Sea's loveliness. . . . Again will struggled within like a separate identity, the jumble of sense data reorganized itself into a locality again. He was at the top of the break-water steps, above Astillero; there was a fluorine smell of urine on the steps . . . a metal advertisement placard hanging outside one of the cafés facing the beach was squeaking a little in the off-shore breezes, a piece of paper was lapping like a tongue. . . . No, he must check that absurd attention to detail. . . it was morbid, unnerving if carried too far. It was only necessary to get a grasp on the real world.

He went down the steps and turned the corner. No one was in sight. . . .

This dream must be shattered, he decided, looking round at the other patrons of the Reclus. The life of the café was an animation behind plate-glass, its sound and warmth seemed

## LEAN MEN

shut off from him. That man with ear-rings over there, he knew all about him, he was a radical-socialist, claimed to have gypsy blood in him, played draughts for a hobby, rolled cigarettes with astonishing dexterity. "No," he snapped to himself, "steady yourself, man."

He decided to try some line of philosophic thought. For instance . . . yes, that would do. Whence came our concept of Time, was it possible to derive it from some logical faculty of the mind without interference to the external world? . . .

No! All these attempts to fasten on to Reality by observation or by familiar speculations were nothing more than baulkings at it. Upon the old reality a greater had been imposed. What was that Reality?

That he had killed a man.

Manslaughter was more important than a pair of thin gold ear-rings or the concept of Time. Somewhat.

Very good then, face it out, he said grimly, how did it all come about?

First the evening's furious debate at the Centre, at which Pere and Texido had demanded a more drastic policy. Their victory by a large majority over the group led by Alonso and himself, which had argued that the time for insurrection was not at hand. And then, when the result had been announced, his adhesion to the new policy. "If the Centre demands a sharpening of policy then I surrender my position, I shall not desert," he had said. Afterwards, reeling with a headache from the incessant labours of the past week, he had decided to go out to the breakwater and walk round his beloved docks. Matapeix had suggested a spot of fishing and he had accepted.

It would be good to sit still and listen to the sea breaking upon the blocks; there would be fishing boats at sea with yellow lights. The Centre had been very excited that evening, no wonder he had been unable to control it. During the afternoon of that day, the 29th of July, a group of workers had distributed handbills on "The Brutal Reality" in the district of Clot. The Civil Governor had ordered the confiscation of the bills and the arrest of the distributors. Somehow or other the vanload of armed police and a few bystanders at the entrance to the street had come into collision. One guard and a member of the Centre had been wounded. Feeling had run high throughout the debate. Pere had argued

## ANONYMOUS DEATH

that a revolutionary coup was needed to put an end to the period of suspense and turmoil, to close a century of agonized unrest. The miner had triumphed. . . . Well, his arguments were mighty strong. . . .

Then, while the two of them had been quietly padding along the outer and lower platform of the breakwater, they had heard swift running steps above them: two men whom they could not see had run by in the direction of the Porto-coeli lighthouse. Matapeix had seen nothing ominous in this, but Francis had suggested a moment's rest for a cigarette. How difficult it had been to prevent the angler exposing a bright glare from his pipelighter.

Two nights ago, when Pere had been walking on Western with Teresa, a bullet had suddenly flattened itself against a coal-hoist leg behind his head. Probably some fanatic anarchist, they had decided, anxious to remove an enemy of the Idea.

There was division in the anarchist ranks, too. Violent debates were proceeding within the F.A.I. It was openly rumoured that Pestaña's friends had been forced to form a bodyguard for that more moderate leader, against the "exalted ones" of the anarchist extreme.

The rule forbidding their members to carry arms was still in force . . . yet if he had not broken it since the attempt on Pere, at that moment he would be jogging like a sodden baulk among the blocks of Portocoeli—the Gate of Heaven!—ironic name.

As they had passed the tent of sacking from which, during the daytime, an old woman sold refreshments, two men had suddenly sprung out upon them, one seizing Matapeix from behind, fiercely counselling non-resistance. He had heard a movement behind him and had spun round and lashed out instinctively . . . as once he had done one night long ago at a mirror hung in an unexpected place in Flinthouse. The blow, mistimed, had staved his left thumb, but none the less his assailant had gone sprawling into the sacking. He had heard a metallic blow on the cement and the rattle of a loose magazine as he plunged through the lapping water to the blocks which shut out the deep sea. . . . The image of the frond of water which licked up, beard-like, against the legs of the man bestriding the gap, was very clear.

What courage the fellow must have had. . . . He must have

## LEAN MEN

seen the gleaming Parabellum as he clambered on to the tilted cube. He had not made a sound nor wavered as he felt his way up the slope—measured the distance between the blocks and took deliberate aim . . . nor even as he tottered, crumpled forward, and struck his head upon the sharp edge on his way to that cradle of dirty water, where he now rocked with anglers' refuse, scraps of paper, cork and rejected bait offal.

That courage was not a characteristic of the hired gunman of the professional criminal. . . . Some poor lad intoxicated with the Idea. . . . Some starving ex-peasant tuberculous with the city in which his hope of relief had been destroyed. . . . Who could know why he had gone out there to destroy a man? Who could know what was the measure of his guilt? The warmth of Reality surged into his consciousness again, he wanted to return to the blocks to peer down upon that poor inebrate of doctrine and despair who had so bravely fallen, to take him in his arms. The voice within was crying with a passion that cynics would have called hysteria, but which to him was the pure solid stuff of experience. "Oh my brother," he murmured, "my brother."

This was an affair between two men, between two consciences, the State and its trappings of Law seemed far off, a monstrous structure of insincerity created by interested cowards. The only necessity was that this man should understand that he had not fired with bitterness. . . . The affair, the place itself had seemed like the phantasm of reality—appeals, words might have stayed the drama. Words had been impossible. Perhaps the dead man, too, had been held fast in a dream, so silent he had been.

He left the Reclus and turned towards Alonso's lodgings. Once he had written, in the fine way that critics use, that Villon's terrible ballade beginning "Frères humains qui après moy vivez" should be sufficient comfort for any extremity of loneliness and despair. . . . But now, isolated from men by one hour of time, the vanity of all things save human love lay utterly exposed. Alonso would understand, he was the nearest to whom the husk of his personality opened most readily.

The unreasoning terror of conscience he had felt was disappearing. This was a contingency for which his reason was prepared. The death of Arolas and Gerard's illness had compelled him to think out the involved problem with rigour.

## ANONYMOUS DEATH

He knew that Gerard's fate would never overtake him. In Gerard's case the instant of time in which he had fired at the mining foreman had been like the farmer's utterance of the word "Water-woman" in Xavier's story. Something had been destroyed, perhaps the bride of Reason, though for a while her children lingered on.

But his life had not been built on water, all he needed was fresh initiation into life, the baptism of friendship. There was something fitting in the sacrament of the Catholic Church, that a penitent should take absolution from a fellow man. . . . In his case the sweetness of friendship should take the place of priestly power.

"Frères humains qui après moy vivez, N'ayez les cuers contre moy endurcis," he repeated to himself as he entered New St. Francis Street. But he was already half aware that that was a mere literary comment.

"Hullo, what murderous plot are you two hatching up?" he forced himself to remark.

"I've broken the bulb," explained Alonso, "and we're running short of candles, excuse the religious dimness."

Teresa took a box from under the bed and placed it for him at her end of the table.

He had not expected the girl to be with Alonso at this hour, though his plan of making them joint editors of the Bulletin had brought them together very frequently. At his suggestion Teresa was writing "The Life of a Woman," her autobiography, the first instalment of which had appeared that week. He had hoped also to find some clue to the understanding of Gerard's nature in her Life.

"The next number is going to be a fine one, Teresa's turned out a lovely description of a garden."

"No, it's of father teaching us in the garden."

"Well, then, there's a garden in it, and two children under a tree of Choke-Dog pears, and father with a book."

"We were more than children—Pere had been down the mine."

"Two children, you say!"

"Yes, Francis," replied the girl. Perhaps his imagination was too excited for exact observation, but it seemed that the

## LEAN MEN

girl was embarrassed by his reference to the number. Why had Gerard not attended?

"Well, now we've got you here, perhaps you'd like to do a spot of work, son?" The Murcian pushed a pile of manuscript over the table to him. Was the invitation sincere? How happy Martinez had seemed when he had burst in on them.

"I've started on *Pueblo* and chucked it away, put it where the King of England put the French King's coat of arms, as a matter of fact." Odd coincidence that Alonso should refer to that ribald story about Villon, he felt that Life was playing artistically false with him.

"I'm going to write all my poems in strict metre and rhyme for the future."

"You are?" It was difficult to take the poet's cue. He was evidently in one of his fevers of creative enthusiasm during which he would talk only about problems of literature, for and against Imagism, Symbolism, Classicism and so forth.

At any other time he would have started a wrangle; just now this was like jesting at death, which was all very well if it were your own death. That Alonso should not have seen that he was in some needy plight of mind was unlike him. No doubt it was his joyful excitement at Teresa's presence which had made him so insensitive.

"Now I have here a few specimens of the genus sonnet, at last. I'm going in for a course of sonnets, for my bumpkin's book. Sonnets are good for an inspiring bard, Assisi. Language is neither metal nor . . . nor butter of the fragrant cow, but you can treat it as either. Treat it like solid metal, lay it across the anvil and the very sparks that fly off will be brighter than if you call it . . . lard and treat it so. Good debating stroke that, contains a hint of the lowliest of domestic beasts. For my part I feel that so much of this modern stuff is modelled in a substance not even fit to grease the wheels of the Olympic chariots—how like a critic the good man speaks."

Francis took up one of the sheets. It was difficult to decipher Alonso's drawing, he could not be said to write.

### *Village Burial Ground*

*A broken acre on the hill's red flank  
Walled round by stone wrenched from the broken hill.  
Here men whose lives were but the hill's odd prank  
Crumble to dust and are the mountain still.*

## ANONYMOUS DEATH

*No yew or cypress weeps within these gates,  
No grace the mountain gives to man who mourns,  
But stark and dumb its own slow doom awaits  
And hope and cold despair alike it scorns.  
Yet here, though barren seems deny him peace  
Man makes himself what little ease he hath,  
For when on summer nights long labours cease  
The village lovers mount the lonely path,  
The deathless wind may hear how, scorning death,  
The Unborn whispers in a lover's breath.*

He put the poem down without comment and looked away. Abstraction pointed out that his friend was fast approaching poetry, there was less concern with the pure unrelated beauty of the world and more with Man and with it a growing distinction of language. But it was indeed this poem's nearness of approach to the vital stuff of life, its very theme, which probed and slashed at his spirit. This was Reality, yes, Alonso was being himself, but what he had imagined was something . . . well, more dramatic perhaps. He had longed for the simple release of friendship, of some intense interpenetration of spirit that would restore Life to him. This was not Life, but three people sitting in a wretched room by candlelight, on broken chairs and boxes, discussing—words.

"That sheet of scribble in front of you is the first of the City poems in embryo—that's how I shove all my stuff down at first."

The page was a mass of scrawl and erasure, epithets and slang observations were jotted down at all angles, whole lines were repeated, crossed out and copied again exactly. Beneath one line was written, "The baby kangaroo when first born measures two inches in length," and this was followed by an obscenity. That was Alonso's brand of sarcasm at irrelevance. So far as it was legible it ran:

*Ballade of all Things whereof a City is made*

*"Your strong walls once I held, your wharves in this  
I hold within my grainy arms," said Stone;*

*"And my rough lips in spires hold up your kiss  
Towards heaven. . . ."*

*"Be silent gaoler," spoke out Wood.*



## LEAN MEN

*(Put in wood, iron, silver and so forth)*

*"Then Gold spake, 'Cease all ye vanities !'  
Before that Magister the din grew soft  
'Know all ye rabble that all power is  
Within my fee, all merchandise in mart  
Or ship, all Beauty, Truth, yea even bliss  
For Love itself is bought with gold. Hush ye baselings,  
And ponder well how in the Mysteries  
The Christ of Wine in gold is lifted up.*

*On gold the Christ of Bread unleavened lies. . . .*

*All the substances save one grudgingly acknowledge the greatness  
of Gold.*

*Then Lead speaks (suggestion of rifle cracks?)*

*And then I saw how all things bowed the head  
In silent praise of that sweet saviour Lead."*

"No, no." He had expected the words to issue as a cry, they were merely a suppressed groan.

Alonso closed the door behind him and followed him down to the street.

"Now tell me straight out, did you come for the girl? You didn't seem a bit interested."

"No, I didn't know she was here, I came to see you."

"Well, then, don't go—stay the night, son, your head's bad I can see. Do you love Teresa, is that it?"

"No. . . ."

"What's the matter, Francis, you gave me the chance to be with her."

"It's not that. . . . I'll take another stagger round—there'll be a few groups at the Centre, I expect, on a night like this."

"Sure you won't stay?"

"No, son, go back to your bed, mother will come to you presently." Montserrat Corominas slid her hand into the neck of the boy's sleeping suit and tickled his back, pushing him away in gentle rebuff. The child laughed quietly and pressed against her side.

"Uncle Francis will be angry with you, he won't tell you any more stories about English boys."

## ANONYMOUS DEATH

"I want to hear you play."

"No, dear, I'm not going to play any more, run back to your bed—jump into mine if you like."

The boy put out his hand and touched a note. "G, that's G."

"Yes, that's G, but mother mustn't play any more to-night."

"Grr. Grr," said the child with a frown.

"Yes, Señor Domingo downstairs will be cross with us if we do."

"I want to talk to Uncle Francis."

"Let him stay, Montserrat, I beg you. It's too hot to sleep. I'll close the french window if you think the night air will hurt him."

"I like the moths, leave it open, Uncle."

The boy Cristóbal climbed on to his mother's lap and rubbed his face against her sleepily.

"Naughty son," scolded Montserrat, "you'll never discover any continents if you make mother spoil you like this. What will Uncle think?"

"Let him stay, to-night . . . you understand. Why did you let me in? You must know it will help me if he stays."

Montserrat gathered the child into her arms and crooned to him: "Go to sleep then, Captain Columbus."

"Good night, my captain," Francis saluted as the child had instructed him after explaining that the settee was the *Santa Maria*, at his second visit.

"Good night, lieutenant."

"You were saying that Music seems outside of Space but within Time to you, Francis."

"Yes—the greatest music does seem like that."

"Uncle, aren't you going to tell any stories?" Cristóbal interrupted and slipping from her lap stumbled over to his knees. He lifted him and folded him in his arms. Tenderness and gratitude flooded through him as Christóbal put a hand against his face.

"No, son, come to mother, please, dear."

"Let me have him, Montserrat." He pleaded frankly, not trying to hide his hunger.

"Come to me, son." Señora Corominas gently wrested the child from his arms; the loneliness which had slowly disappeared as they had sat talking of music, space and life returned again.

Comfort had not flowed only from their conversation; she

## LEAN MEN

had admitted him to her room without verbal explanation after looking once at his face. She had led him to a chair and spoken softly to him and touched him calmly with intention of comfort. After that words had possessed spiritual currency.

Why would she never allow him to take the child in his arms? At first she had tried to prevent her son speaking to him; and then when Cristóbal had climbed on to him she had deliberately taken the child away. Perhaps to see him fathering the child reminded Montserrat of her dead husband. The boy had soon grown fond of him, it was he who had dubbed him Uncle Francis; the title, later dropped, had left him as plain Francis to the mother. . . .

" . . . You ask me what quality or emotion music holds within itself," said Montserrat. " To me music is just loneliness—one loneliness speaking to another, as if some spirit existed entangled in matter."

" As we seem to be. . . ." The experience of that night, upon the summit of Sant Llorenç was reawakened in him. It was not only that this woman was uncovering her mind to him, but that she too had been striving to get a clear understanding of this feeling of loneliness, the profoundest of all emotions in life. He remembered standing upon the roof listening to the wind eddying upon the echoing cliff face, whispering over the tiny particles of the parapet, hissing through the leaves upon the cliff brink; imagining the grains of air going lost and wandering through the night. That sense of being a particle of life itself, lost in a vast wilderness of matter into which it had wandered, or out of which it had sprung, returned to him again.

" Yes, music is man's loneliness consoling itself—with tales of wandering, like a child."

" I have thought that explains everything, Francis, yet it seemed absurd. I thought it was because I am a woman." She seemed to smile wryly at her remark.

" It does explain everything. . . . I know the mind doesn't advance by cold propositions once it has caught the clue of things. I can't prove all this, but . . . there is a husk around personality, a hard resisting shell which keeps one from another, so that we erode and abrade when we strike, and are as blind and as random as the atoms of a gas. It seems that all our faiths, politics, art, revolutions—it is best to state them

## ANONYMOUS DEATH

without prejudicial order for they are all on a level—are just so many blind efforts to break down that loneliness, to pierce the shell of personality. Perhaps that is the spiritual aspect of conflict. We have never spoken of this, Montserrat, but sex itself is such an effort—yes, I see it now. Listen to me. I have lusted, betrayed . . . and loved with the poor instrument of the body, and even in loving—I mean in embracing a woman, I have felt that sex was only a means to an end, an end that could be accomplished without it if only we were honest—truthful enough. I do not mean anything platonic, profounder than that by far. It eludes me when I think of it. Sometimes I have wanted to dispense with the embrace of sex—just to touch a part of the body—a shoulder, a knee, the small of the back, a hand has seemed to me sufficiently—not symbolical but instrumental, sufficient to pierce that shell. Sex is but the easiest way of breaking through. Its accomplishment for me will be the easiest way of dispensing with it. I have felt it also with friends—with women it is just easier, but not in the last analysis different in kind; the final value, deeper than love, is that realization that we are not after all alone. We are not lonely. If only we could understand—no, come in contact with one another—all duties, all privileges, all rights would disappear, all wrongs, what need would there be for accusation, for penitence even, for forgiveness? What I have just felt is slipping from me . . . it always does.”

The child, awakened by the loudness of his speech, sat up. Montserrat remained as she was, lying back in her chair.

“You say there is no need for forgiveness, Francis.”

“No, surely not. What do we know of life, what can we know of its subtlest ways? Only in the mass can we touch it. How can we excuse or imagine injury? Only an Almighty God could need forgiveness . . . there is sufficient sorrow in the world without introducing fresh need. Montserrat—do you know what happened to me three hours ago?” He held out his hands towards her. “Let me tell you why I came here.”

“Is it necessary for me to know? Tell me—if you wish. The child? Will he understand?”

“No. It isn’t necessary . . . now.”

They remained quiet for several minutes and then again

## LEAN MEN

Cristóbal slid down from his mother's knee and he gathered him to his arms.

"Let him stay, Montserrat—— You like Uncle Francis, don't you, Captain Cristóbal Columbus?"

"Captain Francis."

"Ah, you don't know about that naughty Captain Francis who quarrelled with the Spaniards. A real Captain Francis."

"Tell me about him."

"He singed the King of Spain's beard, burnt the tip of it. The very weeniest tip."

"Oh!" The child pondered with wide opened eyes.

"Tell me about it."

"Some day. I'll draw it in pictures as we did with Cristóbal Columbus. Lots of ships, islands, beards and all. . . . Montserrat, whatever is the matter! Go to mother, Cristóbal. I'm sorry if I've offended . . . hurt you."

"No, oh, don't make me cry in front of him."

"Play the piano, *madre*."

"No, keep him, Francis."

The woman rose and knelt by his chair, the boy stroked her head with heavy caresses, smoothing out her hair from the parting.

"Would you like me to go, Montserrat?"

"Soon. Nurse him a while."

"What is the matter? Can I help you?"

"Don't say any more, go soon, I beg you. This is inexplicable to you, I know. I will write and explain. No, come again and I will tell you. *We'll* tell you, all three of us. Thank you for all this, I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

. . . Colour was already beginning to steal into the grey shapes of the houses as Francis hurried through Casco Viejo. The burst of firing in the neighbourhood of Mercaders Street was now being answered from farther to the east, around Urquinaona. In the silence of the dawn the pistol shots echoed like blasting charges on the face of a precipice. They were a music that made him double his pace in haste to reach Taulat Street. A picket told him that a fresh wave of strikes was to begin that day, of taxi-drivers, printers, sections of the port, tailors, furniture and metal-workers. . . . The hospital workers were threatening to strike. There was work to be done.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### IMAGE OF OUR LADY

THE sixteen of them had been informally chosen by the Revolutionary Committee to smuggle across the border the arms purchased in France on behalf of the Centre by Pere, whose active policy had now been even more heavily endorsed.

Arms Commission No. 1 had acquired a score of nicknames by the time they had reached Balastro, en route for the Bujaruelo pass above Gavarnie.

Martinez had begun it by hatching up doggerel verses to be sung to popular tunes of the day. The civil guard on the rear platform of the railway carriage had listened with amusement to the singing until, tiring of the meaningless verses, he had gone off to another part of the train.

"A bawdy ballade made by Master Martinez in derision and defiance of pious priests, pompous popes, prosperous pimps, jobbing judges and all jugglers with justice in general, bad bankers, lewd landlords, miserly merchants and all damned and dignified dons, to be chantée and cantada to that most sweet and fecund tune, 'Thomas, I desire to be a matron.'

*What shall we bring from La Belle France?*

*Four hundred good guitars!*

*What shall we do with our nice guitars?*

*We'll make the big bears dance."*

Masera and Elípe had consented to nooses being put round their necks. "Now then, the Gay Troubadours, the Jovial Company of Melodious Twangers of the Guitar, what shall we bring from La Belle France?"

One or two peasants had joined in the responses and then the greater part of the carriage.

"Dance bears, dance for the ladies and the general on the

## LEAN MEN

platform!" The two had whoofed and clumped up and down the carriage in passable imitation of dancing bears, though the subsequent baiting had suggested a change of verse.

The Gravediggers Corporation, Martinez's Syncopated Circus, The Little Brothers of St. Francis, who made friends with birds and baptised monkeys, though this latter was not part of the strict canon protested Isidro vigorously, and the Hot Rhythm Harvesters, were other names considered appropriate. In this month wandering bands of harvesters were a feature of the country-side.

Everything had been good humour and boisterous horse-play until they had finished the meal in the inn at Barbastro. Now, a quarter of an hour after the bus was scheduled to leave for Boltaña, Masera and his group had not come down from the dining-room. The after-dinner joviality had started the trouble, a sing-song had led to a mock cabaret and then the waiter had told Foix, who had been Elipe's victim, that there was a really hot cabaret in a popular though irregular house near the inn. They had one of the prettiest little girls in all Aragon at the house, so cute and small they carried her round on a tray not much bigger than the waiter's. All naked, for the patrons to kiss. Masera had suggested that they should visit the cabaret that night and journey up to the pass in one stretch to-morrow. They were all tired and they would arrive in Boltaña long after dark. Why not rest and take a little diversion? Foix, Martellat and two others had supported him, Elipe remained neutral.

Texido, Francis and Alonso went up to the dining-room again and tried to persuade them to see reason.

"What do you want to muck about for at a cabaret?" Alonso demanded of Elipe at last. "Your blasted knees'll tremble like a lamb's to-morrow on the pass. Mountains and mountebankery don't mix."

"Plagues and carbuncles, you're right!" agreed Elipe with sudden illumination.

The wrangle had broken out again. They had no intention of indulgence, argued Masera, it was just the need of entertainment, a spot of dancing.

"Lot of barrel-bellied mares they'll be," scoffed the Murcian.

"That's where you're wrong, there's one or two cute young pieces."

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

"Oh, yeah? I know 'em: bony as a parson's donkey or me in a wet bathing suit."

"Supposing they aren't?"

"Well, put it another way," interposed Francis. "What about you, Foix, you've done a bit of mountain walking—do you want to mix yourself up with that drink-stinking, throat-scorching atmosphere of impurity when you might be getting up to the coolness of the hills? Mountains and impurity make a stiff contrast, you know."

"Impurity, just to set eyes on a pretty girl? To the pure all things are pure," replied Masera sententiously.

"Well, that's as nice a reason for getting the clap as any other I've heard," Aionso retorted.

When the uproar had subsided, Foix turned to the leader of the malcontents and said:

"Come on, Dough Boy, let's cut this bloody cabaret nonsense out, the canary's right." Martellat picked up his sack and followed them down.

Within a minute Masera also descended, his temper the worse for wear.

As the little town of Torla came into sight they sat down on a bank shaded by nut bushes to discuss what new route the unwelcome news they had received in Broto would make necessary. A casual remark by the proprietor of the Hotel Tres Sorores, where they had stopped for drinks, had revealed that the Bujaruelo pass was choked with carabineros and civil guards, some royalist conspiracy in Navarra, just discovered, having had ramifications in North Aragon.

Foix and Charing having had mountain experience were instructed to work out a fresh route. After much argument they decided that the only way available was by the ill-famed Cotatuero rungs, a dangerous route for inexperienced persons.

"There's another point, we can't get over by to-night in any event, damn that ramshackle bus, I say," added Foix as they decided to report.

"We can sleep in the Arazas valley, it's a paradise to what some of us may have to sleep in before long."

"Very well, let's break the glad news."

The Troubadours made light of the risks and elected to have a meal where they were at that moment and then go



## LEAN MEN

up to Torla for coffee. There was no water near, but the spot would be hard to beat. It was its sheer loveliness that appealed to them.

Between them and the village was a stubbled cornfield gleaming like polished brass in the intense light ; the gathered stooks stood motionless with impenetrable shadows of indigo-black among them, not an ear swaying in the breathless calm. At the far side of the field a group of black-dressed women with large white straw hats were gathering the sheaves into stooks, intoning a reaping melody without words.

The town itself was clustered on a rocky spur that ran down from the hills on their left, its fortress-like church with a tall square tower and white body being buttressed up by a high wall which formed a platform for the church and adjacent houses. White houses glittered painfully in the August light, thin rods of blue smoke ascended from a few of the brown roofs. A more beautiful site could not have been imagined. High above the fields, with natural defensive parapets of rock on this side, the headland ran out to a gorge in which the Arazas stream foamed along on its way to the Ebro. Behind it, brown slopes intersected with steep bluffs robbed an enemy of easy ground for a flanking movement, and beyond, towards France, hung the vast red and yellow curtain of the Escuzana cliffs, corridorred with ledges of white rock, pocked with snow in its black-shadowed gullies, utterly impregnable, its thousand feet of precipice gleaming like a Roerich canvas through the fine veils of amethystine heat haze.

Above, the sky contrasted its deep Prussian blue, far darker and less painful to the eyes than the blinding stubble before them.

Only once the singing stopped ; the harsh bell in the watch-tower of the church knocked with startling hardness, and they heard the echoes of both bell and voices die away far off on the cliffs that stood on either side of the valley above the town.

"What a subject for a poem, Francis, that singing and this beauty. How sad it is," murmured Alonso.

"No time now, boy, store it in your bean. It's glorious, I could think we were living six hundred years ago."

The bell knocked again and Masera mockingly crossed himself.

After coffee and a long rest they once more set out by the

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

stony path on the western side of the valley ; the other was being made up by labourers and they had no desire to be much in evidence on this last section. Alonso drew level as they left the upper fields of Torla and passed through a patch of box.

"Son, I've done that poem, while you were playing dominoes, care to see it?"

"I wondered when you were going to be friendly again."

"The last time I showed you my stuff you weren't too enthusiastic, do you remember? That night Teresa was at my place."

"Are you so tender-hearted as all that? I know I wasn't interested, Alonso, but I had special reasons. For instance, why should Matapeix go back home to Tortosa the very next day after my visit?"

"Dunno."

Briefly Francis explained what had happened on the break-water. The Murcian halted and seemed about to burst into tears. The others clustered round a little shelter-like erection among the box bushes.

"And I sat there chattering all that bilge," Alonso's voice was quietly savage. "Shoving my bloody rubbish under your eyes, oh, boy . . . and Teresa saw something was wrong and I didn't—I thought it was headache had got you down a bit, she said you were troubled."

"Well, it's all right now—I've wanted to tell you before, of course. Let's have a smoke here, I don't mind the sun, do you? It was just an unfortunate chance one of your poems was about a burial ground and the other referred to bullets."

"That's odd about that sonnet. I passed over several sheets, two of them were about cheerful things, a piper named Serrallonch was one, another dealt with a village procession. I thought you preferred that graveyard sonnet, you glanced at the others and put them down." Martinez smiled to himself and shook his head. "Do I mind the sun, you were saying. This isn't sun to me—my town is all one quivering foundry at this time of the year, you can't sit on bare stone without a blistered rear— Oh, boy, why didn't you tell me? Francis . . ." deep impulse seemed to throb in the Murcian's voice, he commenced a sentence and stopped,

## LEAN MEN

struggling between emotion and embarrassment. "Speak to me straight out, boy," he ejaculated.

"I understand—I can't—shake hands, though," replied Francis. "That makes me feel better, though there was no fear I should crack up like Gerard."

"Oh, no—I hadn't imagined you would. Teresa wouldn't stay any longer that night—she said if you were in trouble you'd need her, did you tell her?"

"No, I didn't go home until morning; I chucked the trouble overboard before then; I came to see the place of evil in life before I'd left you two hours. I know I was in 'a state of legitimate defence' as they say, but that doesn't make much difference when you look down and see half a face left on your man. Perhaps you'll get a line on this oddity too. I saw you grin about my choosing that sonnet. It was a matter of music put me right. It was a conversation I had, with a woman, Montserrat Corominas the pianist; I came to see that life has far greater possibilities of comfort than it has of sorrows, great as they are. If every man could know what I know now, I shouldn't be here at this moment."

"You mean the beauty of the world . . . of life, was made visible, or believable to you."

"Something like that, to me it's more a question of meaning than beauty, I've always seen that."

"What did you mean, 'you wouldn't be here'?"

"If every man could feel like I feel now, almost any external system of life would be good enough. That sounds like a popular fallacy, I know."

"Oh, I don't trip over that one. You mean that conversionism business, progress depends on individual improvement? You can sum it up in this way, 'If mankind were perfect,' says His Holiness Capital the 120th, 'communism would be possible, whereas unfortunately mankind is very imperfect and we're very glad it is.' But I think I grasp what you mean. Put it from my angle, if everyone could see beauty as I see it—that's not boasting, boy—this world would be a very happy place. But they can't and the matter is that somebody's stopping them, even if that somebody doesn't see either that, or that we are preparing to shove him over the edge of a horrible great emptiness of thin puff."

"Yes, for me it's similar. I came to see the nature of

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

personality and the reason for the fundamental sadness of life, the sense of tragedy which haunts the human race. The insuperable barriers of class, nationality and race, and so forth, are what put sorrow in the world. And someone profits by them and so finds them profoundly beautiful, 'richly' is the word. I'd philosophized about the world before that night on the breakwater, I'd always felt it artistically as well, if one can use that word; what happened at Montserrat's house confirmed me. If I were put on the rack now it would make no difference. That soft world we're set against doesn't know the meaning of the word Bolshevik, it would give in if it did and save a great waste of time and a lot of mess."

"So then, what a hell of a paradox life is. Music and a bumping off make you something . . . well, it can't be said without drawing on someone else's cant. For me poetry and a seduction have done the same thing, or at last will do it."

"Yes?"

"You mean tell you about it? Well . . . ask Tesh . . . don't ask him the name of the girl nor who left his knife point in my shoulder, he'll not tell you. Do you know what it is to grovel before your own conscience and not to be forgiven? There was a girl in Archipel, a sweet little slip of a thing. We loved one another in a silly way, I think . . . that's what makes me such a coward before Teresa, that memory comes up and blacks out the bit of a blossom I want to give her. It's odd, boy, I always wrote scurrilities in verse, but the longing to write something better partly came out of brooding over that girl. That and the little shove . . . the Centre gave me."

"I can understand that; I've never seduced; the women I've told you a little about were beyond that; I've just betrayed—a worse offence, for that's being unfaithful to reasoned trust. I came near to seduction once and I know that I'm more thankful at this moment that I didn't do it than for any other thing I can think of."

"Did you stay with Montserrat? You know what I mean, do you love her? You go there pretty often, don't you?"

"No, for me all that is over until I get back to London."

"Will you ever go back? What if you do?"

"I shall marry."

## LEAN MEN

He sat some time in reverie, watching a lizard run over Alonso's sack inquisitively.

There was a sudden shout from the shelter and then a snarl of protest.

"Stop that at once," Texido was commanding as they arrived at the little shrine, as the shelter proved to be. Within its whitewashed arch were two stone seats, in the back wall a niche protected by wire gauze contained a little blue-robed statue of the Virgin of the Snows. Masera was prising at the gauze protection with the rope-splicer of his Swiss combination knife, which he had forced into the slit through which pious travellers slipped coins in offering to the shrine. There was a chorus of protest from the rest of the party, Martellat alone did not join in. Texido, nominally in charge, had several times commanded Masera to desist.

"It's all superstition," blustered Masera.

"What if it is? That's not the way to deal with it," shouted Vilanova.

"You'll set the whole valley against us," Foix added, pulling at the man's forearm.

"Get away, baby, you always do as you're told, don't you?"

"I can see sense when it's pointed out to me."

"Masera, drop that at once," Francis ordered. "You're making a fool of yourself and something more, too."

With a wrench the man tore the gauze out of the niche and grasped the plaster image in his hand. "Now then, save yourself if you can, Queen of Heaven," he mocked.

"Very well, we shall know how to deal with you."

"So *that's* how it is, then? Perhaps you're devout yourself?"

"Not at all," Alonso spoke with scorn, "to the pure all things are pure, that's all."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Canary, you're very funny, aren't you? Well, see this——"

Masera hurled the image against a rock. It crumbled into a dozen pieces.

There was silence for a minute and then the company began to curse the despoiler.

"Some of you children are afraid, I guess," grumbled Masera. "Well, now the image is gone we may as well have

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

the money." Fumblingly he thrust the copper coins into his pocket and, turning to Texido, said with an effort at sarcasm: "Aren't you going to order the column on, captain?"

"Good enough," said Alonso mockingly. "You'll come to a bad end and figure in sermons on sacrilege, know the type? Lightning strikes wanton blasphemer."

"Oh, shut your face," shouted Masera.

The fire they had built against a boulder had died down; its faint glow illumined only the salient twigs and the glossiest leaves of the nearest beech tree. The man against whose back his own was pressed made no sound or movement.

The night was warm, and he could not sleep, but lay gazing at the brilliance above and the sharp crests of the vast cliffs that stood blackly round Arazas. It was like lying at the bottom of a huge flower whose petals shut out the whole of the troubled world and a half of the sky. The soft turf beneath him smelt sweetly of crushed herbs. The waters of the stream purling over stones made a steady conversation with the night; sometimes an eddy, chugging into a deeper snag, ejaculated with startling resemblance to a human voice.

A nightjar tonked twice on its hollow anvil and a host of little sounds seemed suddenly to populate the night. An owl called from one of the beech stumps that stood around so like troops of enormous elephants. The owl called again and was answered quite near them.

He started and lifted his head; someone had called his name, "Francis." There was no movement in the bivouac, and he lowered his head again. "Francis, Francis." His body jerked violently at the call and he lay tingling with excitement. There was silence save for the whispered conversation of the water. Fool, he said to himself, it's only the stream, a mountaineer ought to know that trick of water by night.

There was a quiet joy in feeling the pressure of his companion against him; he had felt that joy before. Intense yearning arose in him, and he spoke the name "Elizabeth" to himself. Elizabeth. He had lain not far from this spot with her, side by side in a joyful night of whispering and star-gazing, aware for the first time in his life of the profoundest beauty and significance of the night. Two beings

## LEAN MEN

pressed flank to flank, trembling with awakened instincts more ancient and purer than love, she confident in him and he filled with curious and new pride, suddenly afraid of the night, yet loving it.

Not a ripple of passion had shaken them, yet he had desired to reaffirm her difference of sex, and he had touched her breasts and the sweeter intimacy of her body with one firm caressing pressure.

All that heart-quelling poetry, profounder than love, he had destroyed for the sake of passionate love. Elizabeth; the calling in his imagination seemed so loud it might be heard by the man at his back. The enormous gulf of Arazas seemed to shrink to her tiny room in London . . . would she be there or away on her holidays? Away, perhaps. Hungrily his imagination went searching for her. What could the flesh matter, what could love itself matter, when once that haunting loneliness of the mind had been banished by the profoundest friendship—or whatever that spiritual revelation could be called? It was not mingling of identity, no, that was a mere superficial aspiration of passion. It was as if a man, hardened by years of wild freedom, who had never met another human being, suddenly came face to face with a woman and put out his hand and touched her breast and it was soft. No, that was too pictorial, images could not describe that revelation. It was realization of the separateness of identity, as if he confronted Elizabeth and lo! she was a person, a human spirit, varied, throbbing, real, as he was to himself and he to her. As if together they were aware of their separate beings as a startling discovery. One could not enjoy the flesh truly until flesh had become unnecessary. He felt through all his being that over Elizabeth and himself the flesh, while it would be a joy, would have no imperative command, though it would have been hard to explain to a sceptical world how he had discovered that after all the husk of personality had broken down between them.

Upon his returning from Bou, Teresa had unpacked his rucksack, and had found the boxwood spoon.

"A shepherd gave it to me for a woman comrade," he had replied, bending over her box of books.

"Really? . . . but the letters, Francis, E. H.?"

"Yes, but the spoon is for you," he had said at once, sensing

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

her disappointment. "We'll sandpaper that out and put T.C., eh?" He had felt no disloyalty to Elizabeth, and that had made him see how closely La Roja equated with her. The need Elizabeth had satisfied in him was permanent then, it was the real core of his being, and at once he had discovered a host of similarities between the two relationships. He had carved Teresa's initials on the spoon, and she had hung it on the wall above her table for a day. Later he had found it among her post cards of Sant Llorenç.

He realized now that he had indeed really loved Lydia, and this was reassuring; that there was a relationship between man and woman more beautiful than love did not obscure that fact.

The sadness which had invested their problem ebbed out of it as it had from the problem of violence. It was as if through the sadness of the world, of evil, of violence, the ultimate and inescapable purpose of Man's will, a will that would never leave him in dereliction for long, clearly showed in the white radiance of its beauty . . . gleaming through coloured mists of passion and strife. This he felt now with new calmness of spirit, that evil had its place in the world, but that cowardice alone could accept it as a permanent factor, that cowardice alone could throw the burden of its ultimate solution upon a god. . . . Beauty did not live in its own right, or we did not perceive it so, behind all dress of beauty was the ebbing stuff of Time, its very impermanence was what made us perceive it, love it, strive to re-create it: his own impermanence was the root of all Mankind's poetry and creation. So then, the urge of evil was to creation.

And if some day, countless centuries hence, mankind should achieve the perfect life and evil vanished, what sorrow would be left to soften hearts? Death would always be with the world of flesh. It was just that mankind should never assail that invincible stronghold. It was easy to see that only the last evil would be an absolute good.

The race of thoughts became painful, he wished to communicate them. Would day never come that he might snatch a few moments to write to her?

The stream conversed quietly with the night. The nightjar tonked further down the valley, from time to time the water chugged into deep hollows beneath the undercut turf of its banks.



## LEAN MEN

The steep beech-woods with their slippery ravines over which they had scrambled laughingly were behind now. Beds of tiny strawberries, like red birds'-eyes among the bracken, and deliciously flavoured, had meant delay. Masera had gathered a handful for Francis. Alexander, the squirrel they had tried to catch when it had darted up an isolated and blasted tree, had been another hindrance. No one cared, the cliffs made fine sounding boards for the voice, and the early morning was sweet with wild marjoram and carnation. Before them in a wide clearing waved a sea of purple irises, so densely set that the caravan had to break up to avoid crushing them. Fir trees were now predominant, the splashing roar of the cascade, tumbling down its five hundred feet of wall, became louder.

As they mounted higher the spectacle of the enormous cliffs quietened a few of the party. Upon all sides red and yellow precipices, corallored and pinnacled, enclosed them in. There seemed no way of escape from the amphitheatre up whose steep sides they were panting and slipping, yet behind the waterfall cliff still more obstacles arose before the snowy gap of the Breach of Roland would disclose the cloudy abysses of France.

Masera offered to carry Charing's rucksack, and upon his refusal repeated the offer to Foix. No one but Foix and Vilanova were singing, but the former frequently uneasily exchanged impressions with Francis. They were both a little nervous about the route.

An hour later they arrived at the base of the wall. A slender cairn marked the spot where the attack was to begin.

To the left of the first pitch a small bank of rock led to a little terrace. This Francis climbed, and took the measure of an easy grassy chimney which rose from it. Some division of forces would be essential, there would be no room for stances for all the party, despite the ease of the climbing. Foix he sent ahead, therefore, to assist at the exit from the chimney. As Isidro was about to set foot on the bank below, Masera pulled him aside and without a word scrambled with clumsy haste to the first terrace, refusing a hand but clutching Charing's coat as he stood up. Isidro stepped up with complete ease, and giving a quiet raspberry to Masera made his way up the chimney.

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

"Comes natural to the man, he's grandson to a Gibraltar ape," was the comment from below.

Texido proved extremely slow; the rest were merely inexperienced, but it took three-quarters of an hour to reach the base of an easy staircase of black rock, somewhat unpleasant because of water. Another twenty minutes had passed before the caravan had reached the top of this. Isidro proving very useful as "escalator attendant," descending and ascending four times to carry sacks or to aid shaky members of the party.

When at last Francis prepared to attack the next difficulty, he found that the party's excitement over the staircase had totally disappeared. Texido was gazing ahead grimly, Masera's face was a uniform pallor, like old gully snow in hue.

As they advanced along the ledge it grew narrower; at the same time the angle of the rock below steepened until they were above an overhang. Finally the ledge ceased altogether and they were left standing in a long Indian file, between the head of the last pitch and the ill-famed rungs of Cotatuero.

Some six or seven strides in distance across the open face of the precipice began another narrow ledge, slightly higher than the one they were standing upon. Two rows of iron rungs, eight in each, were the only means of crossing.

That there was no real difficulty was obvious, but a fall could only have one result. Below, the sight plunged down perhaps two hundred feet of vertical rock, upon which followed steep screes and slopes that seemed barely to break the straight line before they eased off a little into the steep woods where they had picked strawberries, perhaps two thousand feet below. Arazas was now seen to be nothing more than a gouge cut or crevasse in the surface of the reddish brown earth. Before them, as they faced outward, the Fraucata cliffs glittered like the end of the world plunging through space, as Alonso whispered. On their right the ledges of Arancon swept round to the astonishing spire of El Gallinero. Above, the cliffs rose steeply to the blue sky.

Isidro was the first to cross. Asking permission to take the lead he swung over without hesitation and vanished up easy rocks on the left. In five minutes time he returned, without his sack, stepping and jumping down the rocks as if he had been running the gangway on the wharf. Masera shouted

## LEAN MEN

hoarsely to him to take care. "S'easy," he called and came swiftly back to the first ledge. He clearly enjoyed the fun and began to bubble with laughter. His customary sullen expression had entirely disappeared.

As the party commenced to cross, the dwarf began to exhibit bravado; swinging to the middle of the passage, he kicked his legs in the air and hung by his hands. Rafael hid his face and groaned. Sharp reproof to the dwarf seemed to increase Texido's nervousness.

When the first eight had crossed, Foix led them to the spot where Isidro had left his sack, and then assisted with the remainder. Texido eventually crossed, much more securely than they had expected, and asked to be allowed to ascend. Isidro immediately scuttled down from above and climbed behind Rafael, pointing out the safest steps and crooning encouragement.

Masera and Francis alone remained to cross.

"Come on, chum," said Francis as nonchalantly as possible, "there's no help for it."

"No." The man shook his head.

"Come on, Masera, there's nothing in it—I'll keep right with you and give you a steady if you like."

"No." The dull negative was all he could muster.

Francis spent five minutes in futile encouragement of the man and then crossed over to Foix. "That's damned funny," whispered the mountaineer. "He's a building crane operator, you wouldn't think he'd be afraid of heights."

Francis called for the dwarf and sent him back to try to persuade the unfortunate man. Alonso called encouragingly from the next pitch, upon an easy portion of which he was crouching, clinging to a half-detached leaf of rock. It was no use. Masera would not move.

"Well, as a last effort we'll try moving off," said Foix. "He may follow us."

"Or get into a panic and break his neck." They fell to discussing whether they should lead him to the base again and leave him.

"That's right, boy," Alonso called suddenly.

Masera had stood up and was reaching out with baffled movement towards the first rung.

"Don't hold your breath, Masera."

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

"No." The subdued moan was like a ventriloquist's speech.

Again the man fumbled for the rungs, extending a semi-paralysed leg towards the lower line.

"That's funny, he doesn't look down like a beginner," whispered Foix. "You see, he's used to heights, they don't affect him that way."

"My God!" ejaculated Alonso. Masera had plunged his hand into his pockets like that once before during the attempt. This time he made a cramped gesture of throwing; they saw the copper coins go twisting through the air, spinning like bees in a wind on their way down the enormous void. . . .

They left him weeping on a bank of grass below the first pitch and then ascended, the dwarf insisting on carrying Charing's rucksack. Masera had made another attempt to cross and had failed. They had been compelled to conduct him to easy ground below the cliff.

Half an hour later, when they joined the others near the very brink of the cascade which shot over the cliff near their point of issue, Alonso and Texido stepped forward to greet them. The poet was very excited.

"Francis, we've thought of what's the matter with Gerard—you saw Masera fling the money away, that image-smashing was on his mind, just superstition."

He saw the truth about Gerard instantly. Had it not been for the lingering memory of some puerile psychological theory he would have discovered it long ago. That beating of the breast they had interpreted as a mere memory of childhood, whereas it had been the exterior sign of a very present conflict, deeper than they had imagined.

"Gerard's a Catholic, and a sincerer one than most, at the back of his mind."

"No, just in a muddle, Rafael."

"Neither, in my opinion," said Francis. "If Masera had been able to restore that image and the money and receive absolution he would have been able to cross. He was in no muddle in the strict sense of the word. Gerard's case on another plane is similar. When he shot that foreman he was a believing Catholic. He couldn't confess because of his father and Pere, it would have been interpreted as damning evidence. Bye and bye it was too late, he'd got unhinged a bit, embittered,

## LEAN MEN

his faith had weakened. To get back to that comfort being impossible, he tried to become a communist, perhaps an anarchist first, in order to justify his crime, probably without thinking what he was doing."

"So that's why he would never attend his father's lessons in the garden, right from childhood," Alonso exclaimed.

"Yes, that's right," Texido nodded gravely. "His condition is like that of Spain itself."

"And Masera's," Alonso interjected eagerly. "Then there's a way out for him."

"Two ways, as I see it. He can go back to the church and be absolved. . . ."

"You wouldn't recommend that course, would you, Francis?" Rafael was a little indignant.

"Yes, if the other won't do. That other is for us to try to solve his doubts for him. Tackle him kindly, but without shifting an inch, tie him down to every proposition, split up every proposition into as many as he cares, but make him say yes or no before going on. I wish to hell someone would research into the nature of assent. It'll be agony for Gerard I know, but that is the only way. The mind always tries to escape in shambling detours when we don't wish to believe, and rushes on when we do wish. That's the origin of his strange enthusiasms and reactions, that and the pivot of the family."

"You think that will help him out of it?"

"I'm not sure. Four things can happen so far as logical positions are concerned. Either he'll prove us wrong, we him, or he'll find a position to cover both, or else we shall find that certitude is not possible on rational grounds alone. Each of the first two should help him. The others, if he could see it clearly enough also might put him square."

"Very good, we'll try it."

"What line do you propose?"

"Well, almost the whole of the Church's apologetic philosophy appears vulnerable to me. But the greatest Catholic thinker who has written in my language for many a long day was Friedrich von Hügel. That thinker confesses that the problem of evil is insoluble from the Christian standpoint. Since that's Gerard's problem at bottom, we'll start that way. It's a bit caddish, but the end, if achieved, will justify the means in this case."

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

"Dios, and Mariscal said it was probably some sexual conflict!" remarked Texido as they set out for that breach in the summit crest which poetic minds were pleased to pretend was caused by a sword stroke of the Knight Roland.

The following day was spent in making an awkward journey to the village of Oo, further to the eastwards, near Luchon. It was at this village Pere was to await them with the consignment of revolvers, pistols and ammunition, purchased from a dealer in Toulouse by subscription at the Centre. Caution had prompted them to enter France by a pass well distant from Oo and upon arrival they found that caution justified. A large posse of civil guard had been posted at Venasque, the head town of the Spanish valley by which they had intended to return to Barcelona. Their exit through Venasque would have prevented their return by any neighbouring pass.

At Oo, Pere and a companion he had picked up met them with the welcome news that the workers of the hydraulic enterprise in the Cirque d'Oo had already carried the arms as high as practicable and hidden them upon the Tusse de Montarqué, a bluff peak rising out of the Seil de la Baquo glacier. Again their choice had been justified; Pere had counted upon the assistance of a leading blaster among the hydraulic workers, a former acquaintance.

"He called for volunteers," said Pere as they sat over a meal at the inn. "The whole damned outfit trooped down, they were disappointed we hadn't more to carry up."

"Reds to a man, then!" exclaimed Francis, remembering Elizabeth's first letter, for it was about the peaks at the head of this valley they had spent their honeymoon.

"They're all Spaniards and when a Spaniard goes to work in France he nearly always turns republican first and revolutionary later. Good government, with the Church very much in its proper place, makes him think the French Revolution was worth while."

After coffee the innkeeper's wife discovered that Francis was an Englishman, and began to babble about a certain English writer who had lived three months in the inn writing a great book on the Pyrenees. The writer turned out to be Belloc, but as many Pyrenean inns easily accessible to potterers claim that honour, Francis did not make further inquiries.

## LEAN MEN

And this year we had an English lady for a few days," added the woman hopefully.

"~~Use, Oo~~," interjected Pere's companion. "I saw her myself, ~~only left three days ago.~~" She spent most of her time up at our huts by the Frozen lake; a real corker of a woman, not like the biggest part of the climbers and tourists. We're just lice to them as a rule."

Francis heard this with growing excitement.

"What was she like? Did you talk with her?"

"Didn't have a chance not to," laughed the worker. "She used to come into our canteen when the engineers had gone away for the night and lecture us, proper Bolshevik, though I don't follow French very well."

So Elizabeth had returned to Oo then; it was exasperating to think that she had been there while they were in Barbastro.

"Did she tell you her name . . . was it . . . Elizabeth?"

Pere's companion shook his head doubtfully.

"Was her surname—Helston?"

"No . . . she was called Señorita Chareeng, I think."

"Caramba!" Pere exclaimed with a puzzled glance at Francis. "That's our . . ." he cut short the remark with a renewed glance of interrogation at Francis.

There could be no doubt now that the visitor had been Elizabeth; some odd sentimentalism had prompted her to take his name though she had still called herself Miss. The sentimentalism filled him with pleasure, and then, as the worker went on to describe the carrying-up of the weapons and Pere did not question, Francis let the matter drop. But he found himself thinking about the girl even during the anxieties of the days following.

One sleepless night they spent in the inn at Oo and then set out for the frontier again. The ribbon-like crest of the Seil de la Baquo was hidden by a drooping scarf of cloud as they parcelled out the loads among them. A morbid silence hung over the snowfields; there were no echoes upon the Quairat cliffs when they raised a shout, a dull echo alone fell out of the blanketed air. Listening closely, they could hear the faint sucking noise of melting and subsiding snow and the percolation of water, and sometimes as they followed their volunteer guide around the treacherous snows of the Frozen Lake, a stone thrummed down from the hidden gullies of the Pic Royo.

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

Beyond the Lake the snow steepened and then grey-green ice emerged. The guide, nonplussed for a moment, raced off to the left and met a hail of small stones and melted snow which slid down out of the yellowish blackness above. The tiny avalanche came to a halt about twenty feet short of the guide, who counselled them to remain still and listen. There was no sound until they once more began to move on over a narrow carpet of snow between two patches of bare ice, and then a sudden loud crack rang out across the valley, well below them. One of the rearguard slipped and narrowly escaped a fall down a short snow couloir at that moment.

The beautiful wave-crest of snow that stands poised as if about to break against the lowering rocks of the pass of the Port du Portillon d'Oo, loomed up at last. While walking along this crest the man who had previously stumbled missed his foothold and shot to the bottom of the *rimaye*; two more followed him. They scrambled out easily enough, but one had a broken wrist which gave him intense pain and made the whole party uneasy. It was the first of a maddening chain of accidents which lasted until they reached Barcelona. The fixing of improvised splints cost a quarter of an hour.

Immediately beyond the bar of the pass, steep snow slanted down into the mist, scored with narrow crevasses. While attempting to descend this Texido fell upon his back, spun round as the result of kicking wildly, hit a bar of rock broadside on, rebounded a foot or more into the air, and lay groaning. His injuries were confined to bruises and cuts, however, and the party continued to descend without a prolonged halt. Isidro relieved him of his load. The other injured man insisted on keeping his burden.

"This is a hell of a route," whispered Alonso as they paused at the head of a steep grassy gully that also appeared to open into a void.

"It's chiefly this cloud," replied Francis; "though I've been wondering about friend Belloc, that writer we were told about. If I'm not mistaken he says that exit from no Pyrenean valley is made difficult by glaciers, which, considering he lolled about down at Oo a good length of time, needs explanation. Never trust a poet, Alonso."

"May the Almighty plague him with the large grief of historical epics."



## LEAN MEN

"He's something of an historian, too. A few years ago he went to Segovia and gazed up at the site of the Alcazar. The majesty of its emplacement communicated a mighty truth to the little man. It moved him to say that Spain was initiating a great return to Monarchy, for which all Europe was pining."

Another irritating mishap occurred when they reached the floor of the valley. While searching for a shallow by which to cross the Astos stream, Foix's rucksack slipped and he staggered into a deep snag, endangering the weapons. Not even the lovely granite-bound valley with its rich turf and wealth of cattle restored good humour. Foix decided to dry himself by hurrying on to discover a way of escape from the Vallibierna valley into the vast trench of the Ribagorzana, in which some kind of railway work was proceeding. They would be sure to find sympathizers among the workers.

At the Cuberre Bridge they turned north again as Foix had directed them, and soon found his cairn of stones at the juncture of the Vallibierna path. While they were mounting the first gradients of the side valley a solitary carabinero hailed them from the Venasque path below, stood watching them a while, and then continued upon his way. Night had begun to fall before they reached the upper pasturages. Through the malignant and brooding dusk, thunder muttered, and Francis heard Martellat whispering about the Cursed Mountains above them.

At the limit of the wood line fuel was gathered. Single drops of warm rain, large as grapes, fell at intervals as they reached a group of turf cabins. The thunder was more continuous now, and sometimes, when their eyes blinked, they wondered whether lightning had flashed. Shortly after they had taken possession of the best of the three cabins, Foix came in trembling with hunger, fatigue and excitement, having failed to discern the col. Despite the threatening storm and profound darkness Francis set out to find it, for the carabinero had appeared to continue his descent to Venasque in haste.

The col was easy to find, and it was difficult to imagine why Foix had failed until Francis discovered that he was tingling in every part of his body. He clenched his hands quickly to dispel the sensation, and minute sparks flew from his fingers; a faint singing noise proceeded from the rocks around him, a vague halo of shimmering violet mist seemed to ripple from

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

time to time over the neighbouring contours. He took off his hat to fan himself and it sparkled dimly as he waved it ; wisps of his hair clung to his fingers as he passed his hand over his head. Larger sparks leapt from his heavily nailed boots. The very mountain seemed charged full with electricity.

All the traditional assertions about such electric storms as he was clearly standing within thronged into his memory. The superstition and fear of the peasant became suddenly very plausible as he turned downwards, instinctively trying to avoid striking the rocks with violence. It seemed indeed as if the thunder increased to an earth-shaking boom as he hastened, and sank to a rumble as he paused. No rain fell, and sometimes fierce eddies of wind shook him as if they were hands reaching down from the sky. A continuous buzzing in his ears and a sensation as if the pressure of his blood had been increased to the bursting point confused Francis and made him dizzy.

The fear that a sudden movement would discharge that immense canopy of terror overhead became vivid, and for a moment bordered on unreasoning panic. The night was alive, it was an omnipresent God of primeval wrath, a Jehovah of vast cunning and titanic power, bending over the cowering peaks with ineluctable hate of one man, creeping slowly through God's ever-closing night-black digits. The invisible hills themselves conspired against the man and servilely leagued themselves with Jehovah, mysterious and dreadful in their hate. Somewhere on his left a torrent rattled in its bed ; it seemed to be fleeing desperately from an approaching cataclysm. When a hawk strikes at a lark, all the adjacent heath holds its breath ; as he slipped from rock to rock it seemed to Francis that the world had suspended speech and its breath was hissing through its teeth.

The exaggerated image was sufficiently grotesque to check the blind impulse to charge madly downhill. He stood upright and gasped with relief. An instant later the whole massiff seemed to spilt in half and the dazzling lava of the earth's interior to spill out ; a vicious blow struck his eyeballs, and a terrific roar that leapt against the surrounding cliffs and peaks and hurtled back again with augmented volume shatteringly swept over the mountainside. Intolerable agony knifed his ear-drums and he fell, clutching his head, and rolled down a steep glacis of smooth schist.

## LEAN MEN

The thunder shook the world again, and for a second Francis was looking out from the interior of an incandescent planet which was as suddenly annihilated, leaving him suspended and alone in the blackness of a ruined universe upon whose far-off limits the collision and ricochet of worlds resounded.

Stooping, Francis discovered that his nose was bleeding profusely, yet he had incurred no serious hurt. He hastened forward and plunged into water to his knees. A stumble took him to his waist depth. Another burst of consecutive flashes, further off behind a peak, revealed the glittering surface of a little lake. Another tarn lay beyond, and over it a sharp ridged peak.

He regained the glacis and paused a while. It was the beauty of the storm which now impressed him, at each flash the tarns and the threading torrents reflected the fierce brilliance, so that the earth itself became incandescent, and he was surrounded by a sphere of astonishing splendour. Hot rain was falling now, and the light atomized as it flashed and hung an instant like a veil of gleaming silver, through which peaks of jet loomed distantly.

During a lull Francis heard a voice crying above him, and he stirred his stiffening limbs and painfully withdrew his electric torch and shouted. Martinez and the dwarf scuttled down the slab and took him by the arms. They released him as he shook his shoulders.

"Hell, you're wet through," panted Alonso. "Has it been raining long? We walked into it like a curtain a moment ago. It's standing still."

Isidro explained the matter by slipping into the water, blaspheming viciously.

"How are they taking it down at the hut?"

"Not too bad, boy. Of course it's got on their nerves a bit, but that's to be expected. It absolutely frightens me. I couldn't bide down there with you blowing about up here like a stray paper kite. Besides, we want your decision. Just after you set out we saw three lights down by the last trees. The fellows think it's the carabineros."

"They wouldn't have so many lanterns if they were shepherds," argued Isidro emphatically as they moved off.

"Why should they expose themselves, then?"

"They may have had an accident," Francis suggested.

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

"Is it safe to make the pass, do you think?" Alonso spoke nervously. "The storm seems to be hanging about up there."

The declivity steepened. The thunder pealed again with renewed violence, and now that they were lower they were more deeply immersed in the billowing echoes. After each reverberation that died away they could hear Isidro muttering through his teeth. Drawing level with him Alonso laughed with genuine amusement.

"He's got his hand on his gun," he called to Francis. "Defensive gesture against the Almighty!"

The dwarf burst into a storm of imprecation. A zigzagging flash stabbed down ahead of them, and they could see him waving his arms over his head in denunciation of Alonso, silhouetted against the blazing shield of the last tarn. A succession of flashes pained their eyes and then Isidro suddenly yelled and grasped Alonso's arm.

"O Jesu! *Look. . . . The hut!*" he shrieked, and lapsed into a wild moaning of grief.

They stood aghast. Below them, where they knew the cabins were situated, a small red cone of flame was tugging at the hill-side like a reversed umbrella upon its handle. The flame immediately grew pennon-shaped and bright yellow, illuminating the streaming slabs before them with points of tawny light. Then to their horror the pennons gathered together in one swirling column which revolved upon its narrow base, an explosion of flame spread out instantaneously at the foot of the column and the whole conflagration soared up in a crackling globe, a hundred feet or more into the plunging sky, swelled as if distended by some centrifugal force and burst asunder in rent clouds of flame and a hail of sparks.

Darkness closed slowly over the mountain. A few wisps glowed in the sky and then vanished.

Paralysis gripped them for a moment and then they stumbled forward indecisively, Isidro alone continued to advance a few paces more. The dwarf fell upon his knees and began to mourn, his speech transmuted by grief to an utterance that even in that moment astonished them.

"O weep over them, weep over them, scatter tears upon the hill, O weep tears upon this dark mountain of the many dead!"

## LEAN MEN

"Here, come on, brother," shouted Martinez, shaking the dwarf. "Let's get down and investigate."

Isidro scrambled silently to his feet and followed them.

As they drew near their hearts leapt for sheer joy; electric lights were flashing before them.

"Foix! Tesh!" yelled Alonso and the group ran up to meet them.

"The hut! We thought the hut had been struck."

"One of the others," gasped Foix. "A whirlwind has taken the roof off ours and Martellat's had a stone fall on his head."

"The Virgin be praised—we thought you'd all be sticks of charcoal," ejaculated Martinez and sat down abruptly. "All that bloody poetry of yours wasted on the howling air, short-arse," he whispered to the dwarf who stood by sheepishly. Isidro shouted suddenly and grasped the poet and crooned to him as he had done to Tesh on the Cotatuero cliff. Martinez had fainted.

There was only one thing to be done, and after being reassured by Martellat and Alonso that they were ready to continue, Francis ordered the party onwards. Both Texido and Pere tacitly handed over command of the expedition to him without comment.

When hours later dawn found them near the lakes of Rio Bueno, they were covered with the red stains of the schistous rubble over which they had dragged themselves through the leaping and swerving storm.

Perfect tranquillity reigned in the camp as they halted and ate; ill-temper had vanished, even though they were drugged with fatigue. Many confessed they had experienced a strange and wild joy aloft on the thundering heights, and all commenced to talk excitedly of the events of the night.

As Pere had foretold, they received guidance and help in the Ribagorzana valley; a transport charge-hand placed a wagon at their disposal, by means of which the journey was shortened by half a day. They were now among people of familiar speech, for the valley serves as the boundary between Catalunya and Aragon. High spirits were maintained despite the heavy mists that still hung over the mountains.

A line of light railway tip-trucks smeared with clay and cement, about whose gaunt outlines dark mists lazily creep, may not be material for poetry, yet as Francis stood beside

## IMAGE OF OUR LADY

them directing the silent men, a feeling of illumination once more entered him, filling him with serene joy. All the suffering of the human race, all the splendour of martyred faiths, the significance of the dumb hills and the shattered rocks and bespoiled valley seemed to be somehow expressed in the beauty he perceived in a slow wreathing of vapour through the cast-iron spokes of an ore trolley wheel.

The peace it gave him lingered throughout the return to Barcelona, even though their ill-luck held and minor mishaps continually befell them.

By resolution it was agreed that the weapons should be hidden in various dumps until the time for revolt should arrive. A dinner and presentation was subscribed for the smuggling commission, accounts of whose adventures enlivened the spells and breathers on the docks for many days, until more exciting events supervened.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### SECOND IMAGE

ELIZABETH's letter, in which she remembered his birthday with the gravely quaint formula of the past year, filled him with such joy that had his small stipend as curator of the Centre allowed, he would have begged her to come to Barcelona for their marriage. The old restraint of Gray's Inn Road showed in her letters; it was odd that she should have been so unbalanced in sorrow. She indeed confessed that she had cried upon receiving his second letter, but not a large cry, extending as it did over little more than the middle octave of the piano. She did not insist upon marriage, she would prefer not to marry, but consented to please him, and asked him to send her the Spanish chemical industries trade paper in the same paragraph.

The following evening, as he sat in Teresa's room, a parcel arrived, which proved to be a birthday present from Elizabeth—and Lydia. The parcel contained music, his own Dowland, Morley and Cavendish, which he had mentioned in his letter from Castellar, after leaving Bou, a new pianoforte sonata by Constant Lambert, some modern Italian guitar music by Castelnuovo Tedesco and four Toccatas for piano, Lydia's first composition, published by the Oxford University Press. On the first page of the Toccatas was the frank dedication, "To Francis Charing," and beneath it in her handwriting, "From Lydia K. for August 20th, 1931."

Pitching his correspondence into his locker, he took the whole parcel straight to the Centre and tried to sketch out the Toccatas on the terrible old Erard in the salon. It was clear that they had been written to exhibit a very modern technique; advanced in structure they were not though they would be brilliant and forceful, he supposed, when performed properly. No. 3, however, bore a second dedication, "for F.C.," and was

## SECOND IMAGE

comparatively easy. Its sheer loveliness of dissolving lute-like effects made him eager to hear it carefully played.

It was seven o'clock. Montserrat would shortly be going to dinner at the corner café. He decided to join her and beg her to play through the music, and without more consideration raced down to the Rambla and boarded a taxi.

There would be no harm in taking an hour or two off. Since Pere's ascendancy in the Centre, less and less the actual direction of policy had fallen on him. Somehow his isolation from the International had robbed him of that assurance a controlling organizer needed, and this, combined with the rapid growth of their society, had made domination of its activities impossible. Though he was still regarded as the guiding force, he felt that Pere, determined and ruthless in everything and emboldened by the recent miners' strikes in Figols and Cardona, might at any moment supersede him.

This waning of influence caused him no serious regrets, for life was too serenely lovely in these days. Besides, it was possible that in Pere the Catalan workers had found their own leader. As the taxi ran out into Paralelo he felt that everybody must also be full of this tingling vivacity of spirit, they must know or want to know the beauty of this music. The world was blowing with fragrant winds, its colours were pure hues of meadow grass or kingcups beside a stream or the coral-hued rocks of a Mediterranean bay. He seemed to be moving through a landscape of white-walled gardens with black gates and tall palms bearing bee-coloured dates within them, over a plain which ran down from violet-grey hills to a shore of amethystine water, where the sea lapped with lake lips upon the lilled grass. In all that episode Lydia had never written an affectionate page to him, yet now she sent him this music. By now she would be in mid-Atlantic according to Elizabeth's letter; it would be safer to write thanking her to the agent responsible for her American tour, however.

The side-door leading to the upper flat was open when he arrived at Montserrat's address. He did not knock, therefore, but went straight up.

As he ascended the stairs he heard Captain Cristóbal Columbus, as he always called the boy, laughing at the top of his voice. "Die, villain," Cristóbal was shouting, "now you're conquered, *dead dead* this time!" There was a loud



## LEAN MEN

defiance in a masculine voice and once more the pealing laughter. He tapped on the door, the servant girl opened at once, and involuntarily he stepped forward.

The child was standing, naked from his bath, wriggling the toes of one foot among the black hair of Ricardo's chest. The 'cellist was lying flat on his back on the floor, in his shirt-sleeves, pretending to be vanquished.

"Now play again," coaxed Cristóbal, hopping about on one foot. "Get up."

Montserrat, who had been lying on the divan, rose to greet him. She was pale and unsteady upon her feet, but glad to see him.

"Hullo, Captain Francis," said the boy, saluting shyly and then ran to the music shelf and began to draw on his trousers. Ricardo put an arm round the pianist to steady her, and they both stood facing him, the 'cellist pleading silently.

"I have brought some music I have just received from England," he began in embarrassment. "It was my birthday yesterday."

"Many happy years," stammered Ricardo.

"I had thought perhaps you would play it for me—it's too much for my capacity. Perhaps it's not the best time—I'll come when you invite me, Montserrat." He turned away with an embarrassed bow.

Cristóbal ran over and leant against his leg and took his hand. "Uncle, stay and play with daddy and me."

"My son . . . Cristóbal," said the musician to Francis, and withdrawing his arm from the mother, sat down on the edge of the divan and gently compelled her to be seated.

"I'll leave the music and call later," he said at last.

"No, please stay, we were going to invite you to-morrow." The woman spoke clearly though she appeared to be very ill. "Ricardo wished to talk with you before he goes to Madrid next week. Won't you stay to dinner?"

"Very distinguished music," agreed Ricardo as they left the house after dinner. "I cannot say that I like the sonata, there's no warmth nor stability in it."

"The Toccatas—what do you think of them?"

"No. 2 and especially No. 3—I say, how very similar No. 3 is in feeling to your early English music. A Jewess, you say?"

## SECOND IMAGE

The barely perceptible depreciation in the 'cellist's pronunciation of the word caused him to frown momentarily, Ricardo noticed it.

"I am sorry—I remember the Toccatas are dedicated to you, do not think I would deliberately be so insensitive."

Even now, though the episode had been closed and Lydia was on her way to America, he bridled at the remark. It was perhaps by way of restoring their sense of intimacy that the 'cellist began to talk of Montserrat. After awhile his nervousness disappeared and he spoke with quiet dignity.

"After that we appeared several times in public—musically things looked very hopeful for us both—true, her parents—aristocrats of Castellon de la Plana, strongly disapproved of her making a professional career, and more so after her appearance with me. There were quarrels between them—I encouraged her—I had my own embitterments with my father, you see, and that made me advise her foolishly. She broke with them—became interested in political philosophy and professed anarchism. She has written a little, too, upon the Nature of Individuality and the morality of law. We were often together. Then we played at Zaragoza—it was a failure, I tried to comfort her and I spoke of loving her, unwisely. Our next recital was a success—that night . . . it was the excitement, Francis, I see now, the following night we spent together also.

"Then when I returned home my father and I quarrelled again. It was my fault upon that occasion. It sickened me with home life, I think. I was already frightened lest there might be consequences of our folly in sleeping together, and fear had already driven love out, if it was love; it's easy to discover the most tender of loves when a woman begins to yield to temptation—it was her anarchism that made her so foolish, I think—she still professes that doctrine, I know, but now it is a philosophy she has worked out for herself."

"Perhaps it was a philosophy of loneliness she worked out."

"Yes? . . . to comfort her loneliness then. After my quarrel with the chief . . . my father I mean, I wrote to her in panic, regretting what I'd done. I found I didn't love her, I said so, politely—well, I've learned to love my Church in these last few months and I have done penance for that sin—we're not through our troubles yet, for she refuses ecclesiastical

## LEAN MEN

marriage and I cannot consent to a civil . . . but I love her and my boy as I love nothing else on earth, Francis."

The 'cellist looked up as if he expected his statement to be challenged.

"She did not reply to my letter . . . I was glad, yet . . . something had gone, what, I did not then know, now I see that all self-honour and belief had drained out of me. My playing lost its quality, I grew careless, ceased to practice. Then I wrote to her, Cristóbal had just been born then—she refused even to see me again. She wrote that my letter of regret had forced her to that decision the moment she read it. You know what happened to me then. You know where I was playing. I'd lost my art with her, does that sound sentimental to you?"

"No, I can think of a parallel. There is in England a composer of real worth and real character, a man of courage too. In his early days he lived with a woman. I have met both of them and know their case. She is a woman such as Montserrat, a revolutionary, too. She bore him children and he bore by her several works of great beauty. I say that music was her creation as much as his. Well, they quarrelled, hardly quarrelled, but he was advised to leave her by one of our leading writers. He married—and the truth is that he hasn't produced a single work of any real value since then."

Ricardo nodded. "Yes, it is easy to see from outside, a common sentimentalism disposes us to recognize it. It feels different from within, it is all so vastly complicated; to state it in simple terms like that is perhaps as accurate as any other way. Another thing I do not hesitate to say, I shall play better now than I might have done."

They arrived at the café at which Ricardo had an appointment with Guillermo and a certain Señor Quiroga, and sat down together, since the others had not arrived.

"I owe much to Guillermo, as well, for what has happened to me. As soon as he knew I was definitely practising he kept encouraging me. He pestered Montserrat until she complained to the landlord—then your appeal to her was at last successful. You see, Francis, I know you will understand perfectly that a man can love one woman while he's profligating with scores. When I knew she had borne a son I began to brood over her. I found I loved her after all though I could never pull straight.

## SECOND IMAGE

There's no limit to the blackness of the heart when the grace of God is cut off from it, I could write to her pleading for forgiveness and the same night roll in a filthy bed with some obscene strumpet. . . . Once or twice my religion spoke to me; there was a prostitute, a dancer at the Pompeya, who would never take the cross from round her neck even in sinning; that hurt like a knife wound. There are dozens of women in those places who never discard the cross or their beads.

"Montserrat never even set any conditions, though I know now that she has always loved me, against her will, she confesses. All the misery and sin, all the complexity of sorrow we've been through, nor the problem we're left with can destroy my belief that we shall be happy. I *am* happy; did you see how my boy plays with me? He knows nothing of my disgrace, nor of what a father is, it appears. He told me about Uncle Francis within an hour of my visiting her; that was just a week ago."

"Cristóbal and I command separate ships in the Discovery fleet, he's my chief, though I suppose we ought to be rivals, for I've promised to tell him about a certain Captain Drake."

"El Draque? I've heard all about that, he thinks the world of you. Montserrat said she couldn't bear to see him in your arms, though it was depriving the boy of something he needed. Perhaps you can understand that it was too painful for her to see anyone father him."

His passing use of the word "chief" had made Francis think of Trepas House once more.

"Will you tell me how you came to lose your religion, or to regain it? Do you mind?"

"It is all very complicated and obscure—my mother was fonder of me than my father was, she favoured my ideas about music. It was she who taught me the faith, of course. My father always scoffed at it, not openly but he made me feel it was out of date, unmanly. It wasn't hard to leave it behind when I met temptation and trouble. I am not a very thoughtful person, Francis, in the sense that Montserrat is, but I feel through all my being that the Church must guide us. I know you think otherwise, as she does . . ."

"You never lost your faith, through all that mess? I can parallel that also, in a lesser way."

"No. I suppose not. When I first began to practise for

## LEAN MEN

the engagement at your place, I tried to win clear by myself—it was no use, perhaps you wondered why I never kept in touch with you ; most men in my profession are very fond of running round their benefactors. I couldn't give up my ways. My God, Francis, do you know the misery of cutting loose from the flesh ? Every time I began to practise in earnest I knew I should have to break with the life I was leading ; some may be able to mix vice and art, I cannot, and I hold to the belief that the masters of art are those who stand out over it. You see, I want to be a master in my profession, nothing less. But the flesh was too strong and I kept forsaking my instrument. Then I promised myself I'd try to win Montserrat back to me—for at first it was reawakened love for music that set me struggling—to make a slip in playing was torture to me, Francis, my body was so worn that my nerves were like the strings of an evil instrument—a mistake wasn't a false note or a bad tone—it was a thrust back into that maze and stupor of Paralelo. I rushed there with relief ; a dozen times I repented. My God, I lay on my bed and sweated in an agony of craving. . . . Montserrat seemed so far away, as far off as Christ Himself—I know I nearly prayed to her as I would to the Virgin—maybe I did. I moved my lodgings to that place on Asalto and found there was a prostitute living below me ; she found me too and bled me till she grew afraid of me for a madman. In despair one day I went to the nearest church. It was a Jesuit church : there are many who hate the Order of Jesus ; I know they've divided Spain more than any other body in the Church. But I bless the day I went there and the subtle brain that found a way out of my despair. Francis, there's a cunning in all crafts that distinguishes the botcher from the master man, but I can hardly think that priest's wisdom was just knowledge. Yes, yes, I know, there's a cunning of the bone, the muscle and the fibre, and all this system of flesh we misgovern, and there's a science of the mind too. That priest found my way for me. I couldn't pray, there was no sincerity in my praying, only want.

“He told me of other spiritual cases he had encountered similar to mine. ‘Pray with your instrument, my son,’ he told me, ‘it doesn't matter about words or the accepted ways of prayer.’ Would you think a thing of wood and gut could be the whole spirit of a man ? It was that for me, I played

## SECOND IMAGE

even scales and chords the better for that. Then he fitted prayers to music for me . . . that Sarabande I played at your place—I took what is called the aria for the G string to him, that became my ‘*de profundis*.’ I sang as I played and prayed with my mind till I nearly heard the words of prayer in my instrument. He did the same with everything I put before him, and showed me how to do it myself. I’m talking wildly, you’ll say . . . but after a while that evil thing in my blood had less and less power over me. I still sinned, but I got on to my feet again at once.

“Then you persuaded Montserrat to play with me . . . and our recital was a success. Everything seemed to be going the way of grace, a political friend of my brother helped me to get a post as professor of my instrument. I grew careless, proud almost, for things were going too well with my music for my new-found strength to deal with. Then Montserrat wrote again. She said she would play no more with me. I drank myself into a stupor that night and only just dragged myself to my confessor two days later. We prayed together, and played together, for he was a passable musician. I played all my music before the statue of the Virgin and her Son for days, till the picture of that little plaster image was stamped on my brain . . . a few pesetas worth of cheap plaster and paint bought at that shop below my room. No, I’d no sentiment about it; I knocked it down one day, deliberately, and it broke into a dozen pieces. I bought another and set it up in its place. . . . Some might condemn me if I told them the second image I bought was of Our Lady of Montserrat. After that there was comfort in the very name of the Queen of Heaven.

“And then as I was despairing, Montserrat wrote again, she sent Maria the servant, with Cristóbal and told me to come to her. Francis, if I have to live in chastity for the rest of my life it will not be misery to me now. I went to her, she said she had been taught to forgive, to understand life . . . she forgave me. She’s too ill to tell me all yet, it excites her too much, but I cannot believe that Christ and His Mother had no hand in it. Whatever or whoever moved her to forgive me must have been moved by God. I went home that night with the storm in my being quiet at last, as calm as a summer sea with the moon and the stars of heaven glittering over it.

## LEAN MEN

My troubles are not over, but I have the love of a woman to help me now, and my son and my art, moreover.

"My brother," Ricardo exclaimed, and sprang to open the taxi-door. Guillermo nodded violently in answer to the unspoken query in his brother's face.

With the younger brother was a bearded, legal-looking individual carrying a portfolio, who greeted the musician coldly. Francis recognized him at once, there was no mistaking that beard, so similar to Don Gumersind's that their formal conversation had been a duet of silent tattoos.

Beard No. 2 had visited Trepas House the day of Guillermo's violent quarrel with his father over Ricardo's music, the day when the smith had pledged his house. Francis had been making small talk with that curious bird-faced friend of Doña Agata who kept staring at him with such an inquisitive expression, when the beard had arrived. Gertrudis, Doña Gertrudis was her name. The poor woman afterwards had been miserably torn between her desire politely to probe into his history and to sidle nearer to Don Gumersind's door.

In the moment's conversation he exchanged with Guillermo, Trepas remarked that he was meeting de Rivière off the Madrid express that night, and invited him to lunch with them at a restaurant in the Plaza de Catalunya the following day. He accepted, and seeing that the legal gentleman had already produced a yellowish document from his portfolio, made correct excuses and walked to the Centre.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### CALL TO BATTLE

ON the twenty-fifth of August the general topics at the Centre were two, the metallurgical strike declared overnight and Gerard's arrest. The latter's recuperation had been attended by alarming bursts of reckless and hysterical enthusiasm, during one of which he had delivered an oration in front of the Police Headquarters. The arrest was one of many, indeed arrests of their members were getting far too frequent. Yet Texido, who had left the group early, having been called away by a message from the midwife, had told them that Gerard had seemed almost normal again that afternoon. Apparently prison had confronted him with a reality to which he could react healthily.

"It's unfortunate he's in, to say the least of it," commented Vilanova, "just as the *rabassaires* are beginning to move."

"Well then, get him out," the dwarf said gruffly.

Alonso nudged Francis under the table and he tried to appear unconcerned.

"Good lad, you're getting quite a clever boy; why not take Civil Governor Anguera as hostage and exchange prisoners?"

"Get him out, I say."

"Oh, yes?"

"Once he's in the bug-house you can bribe the officials at the Law office."

"With two pesetas fifty, I suppose, or we get a banker to back us for the thrill, eh? Where do we collect the necessary?"

"S'easy, all you have to do is to stick somebody up."

There was a moment's silence and then Alonso whistled softly. "So! And that's how you managed to have a dinner ready for us when we came out!"



## LEAN MEN

The dwarf sat back in his chair and stared defiantly at the Murcian.

"Then you're the man who stuck up the cashier at the Urquijo Bank!"

"No, I didn't." They were bound to smile at Isidro's mournful tone. "That was long after, *burro*."

"Who, then?"

"We stuck-up our landlord."

There was a roar of laughter at Isidro's explanation. The dwarf grinned sheepishly at them.

"Who's the 'we'? You may as well tell us all about it before I give you a damn good thrashing."

"What for? You're out, aren't you?"

"Put that on one side a minute, pitch up your yarn, shortarse."

"Me and Capellans, Arolas's friend, we lodge in houses belonging to the same landlord. He put up our rent."

"Well?"

"So we went round to the last house he calls at and got into a room and waited for him."

"They have waiting-rooms for bandits ready provided nowadays, then?"

"Funny, aren't you? It was a pross's room, she thought we was on business."

"I see. Then in walks the landlord, cash bags and all."

"That's right." The dwarf chuckled happily. "So we tied him up and left him on the bed. S'easy."

There was a fresh burst of involuntary laughter—the affair had been fully described in the papers.

"The upshot being that we come out of jail and the poor lady goes in?"

"That don't matter. I don't hold with bad women, besides we left her tied up on the bed with the landlord, she wouldn't get the blame for that."

"But she was arrested, according to the papers. There were some funny pars about the job."

"That was for bad language to the police. Lord, that woman did use it before we got her all quiet on her western front."

"I take it you behaved like a little gentleman and bought her out afterwards?"

"What, waste good money on a dame like that! Not me!"

## CALL TO BATTLE

We paid our rent with what we had left, that wasn't much, I can tell you."

"Come on, bend down," shouted Alonso, pulling the dwarf towards him.

"What for? Hey, what for, you big-trapped booby?" protested Isidro.

"Bribery and corruption, banditry, assault and probably battery, contempt of civil authorities, unlawful carrying of arms and so forth. You're getting off light."

"You got off light, you mean; you was up for agitation, don't forget."

"And I'm going to paste you one extra for mixing me up in a common crime."

"Don't be daft," pleaded the dwarf comically. "You're out of the bug-house, anyway."

"That makes no difference; Justice is impartial."

"Well then, why the hell don't you go back? Stop it! You're hurting me." The dwarf's submission was laughable, he was probably much the stronger of the two. "Alonso, don't," he pleaded, "I couldn't let you bide in there, could I? . . . Alonso, could I?"

The Murcian peered quizzically at his victim. "Tender-hearted little bandit, aren't you?"

"It was for you. If it'd 'a been one of the others they could 'a rotted first," pleaded Isidro, arousing a fresh peal of laughter.

"All right, this once, then." Beneath his school-dame's attitude Alonso was deeply touched, they could see.

"S'all right, then?"

"Just this once."

The docker shook his leader's hand vigorously and looked round at them with doubtful regard.

"Then it's all right, boys yes?"

"This once," they agreed.

"Now about this strike," began Francis after an interval of chuckling. "We shall probably have three or four on the strike committee. Pere is round at the syndicate now talking to Magrans. He says this is a test strike and is asking for an emergency meeting to discuss it."

"Hey, you've forgotten Gerard," burst out the dwarf. "What about getting him out?"

## LEAN MEN

So Pere had been victorious. The fury of the debate still rang in his ears, argument after argument he might have used flashed through his brain as he hurried along Layetana in execution of his first task in a definitely subordinate capacity.

It was hard to believe they were launching a revolutionary attack; the various strikes being waged at the moment seemed barely to disturb the surface of life, yet two hours ago they had loomed large over the city in their imagination. Was Pere right in his demand for immediate action? That the cauldron of revolution was at bursting point in industrial Catalunya could not be doubted, but what of Spain without? Even within the city, what of anarchism? . . . Pere foretold a popular rising about the end of September; could they wrest leadership of the masses from the anarchists in time to prevent another fruitlessly tragic expenditure of force? Time would tell.

As he turned down a side street towards Urquinaona he saw Haircombs hurry past him at a prodigious rate. How the old woman could travel! he remarked to himself. At the end of the street she turned, glanced back and then disappeared around the corner. He nearly ran into her as he swung round the corner after her.

"*Chico*," she panted, "the police are after you."

"Where are they? How do you know, *Señorita*?"

"Quick, boy, they're right behind you, there's no time."

He doubled along the street, turned right at an alleyway, cursed mildly as he tripped over the great stem of a banana bunch, doubled right again towards Layetana and ran straight into a pair of the urban guard posted at the end of the lane.

"Then since you refer to it, Don Nicolau, I must remind you of January last."

"You wish to force me to behave contrary to my scruples?"

"Exactly . . . it appears."

"*Señor Charing* . . . Francisco, this is very hard for me."

"I am aware of that; I am pleading the events of January. You were spared several months in prison. It might have been many years."

"There's no need to remind me of the details."

"I don't waive an atom of my claim upon you, Nicolau."

## CALL TO BATTLE

"Why are you implicated in all this? You know what I have been told by the police authorities?"

"I can imagine it, hence this somewhat drastic resort. It is all a question of belief, as was your activity. But seriously, is it a drastic intervention I am asking? The mere fact that my arms licence was issued under the Dictatorship does not constitute a serious crime. Get my permit visa'd if you like. You remember the occasion when I received the pistol, doubtless."

"No."

"Mariscal gave it to me at Granollers to protect our escape together."

"Very good. I apologize for my refusal. Let me warn you, though, the police claim to possess certain information. I shall have to refuse further interference."

Layetana was deserted. He crossed it and turned into a carmen's café where the fruit porters of the Plaza Commercial gathered.

"Well, it's a real do this time," a youthful bar-loiterer was saying. "The hospital workers are out, the mortuary men too they say, same as in 1919. A man was telling us up at Arco Triunfo how he saw a pair of civil guards carrying a coffin to a funeral, on their backs. Civil guards, complete with Mausers, swords and rifle pouches, a-sweating under the coffin, what a comic sight, just fancy it! Boy, when it gets like that there'll be something up in the street before long."

As Francis opened the door at Taulat Street he felt it give before his hand. Teresa, who had been sitting on a chair waiting for him, enjoined silence.

"Be quiet, very quiet. . . . It is a little girl." So the child would be called Nieves, as the parents had decided should it be a girl.

"How is she, Lucia?"

"Terribly ill, but not in the gravest danger, the midwife is using your room, you must come upstairs."

They crept upstairs. Tex, who lay in a deck-chair in the dining-room, wearily lifted his head in greeting as they passed. Slowly Francis turned upon the stairs and lifted his hand. The father smiled and closed his eyes.

## LEAN MEN

"Alonso has been here, he left this note for you . . . he was unwell and went without waiting for you. Where have you been?"

He opened the letter. It began without formality.

"My God, Francis, it might have been my own wife moaning and my own child being born . . . and then I thought how it would be if it were really Teresa. I could barely look at the kid, she seemed lovelier than ever to me . . . but how frail! How weak the flesh of woman is. I couldn't say a damn word to her.

"Then while I was hanging out of the window getting a breath of air, we heard the baby cry. It was terrible to hear that little wail and to see all that endless space stretched out towards the stars in one and the same moment. For a moment I felt awful and then when whatever it was had passed I made these verses . . . something has gone from them that I felt. I could easily write some literary bunk about Bethlehem.

### *The Nurse*

*(when Nieves was born)*

*I stood gazing at the far moon's bright face  
When softly they came and told me of your birth.  
Bearing you, O tiny babe, against its breast,  
I saw the vast and cautious ball of Earth  
Go threading the dark rafters of blind space."*

"Your bedclothes are outside, dear," Teresa was saying.

"Thanks . . . let me stay here, will you?"

"You must lie down properly, Alonso told me that we have begun."

"Yes." He looked at her without speaking.

"Come to bed with me, you must rest."

They lay down.

Neither of them could sleep peacefully.

"Why can't you sleep, girl?" he whispered.

"Let me sit up, dear," she replied suddenly. "I ache so."

"Where?"

"Here." Teresa laid her hand above her womb. "I kept

## CALL TO BATTLE

thinking about Lucia so much. You have the bed. I can't lie down again. It's funny how it has made everybody ill at once . . . except the midwife, she grumbled at everything and made us put sugar in the wine. Alonso was upset, too."

"Read this." He gave her the Murcian's letter and poem.

"Does he love me like that, Francis?"

"Do you mean he has not told you?"

"Yes. He told me . . ."

"He's had large woolly bats in his belfry about you ever since you went to Mallorca."

"Francis, I can't marry him, I *can't*—I love him, I want to be with him. I've tried to ask him to stay all night as you do, only I was afraid. I hoped he'd ask me to stay the night you came to his room."

"Why were you afraid—do you remember the mountain?"

"Yes—I feared he'd want to do that, that he'd want my body."

"Teresa, you're not still loving me after what I told you about Elizabeth?"

"No, dear."

"What is it, then?"

"I *can't*. I love Alonso, oh boy, I do with all my heart—but I'm afraid. It's the clinic that makes me afraid. The women, they come all sad and tired and bitter and they don't care about their babies—until they fall sick. I see horrible things, twisted bodies. . . . Oh, you men can't even imagine what you do to us. They don't often complain, they're just animals—they stand about like cattle and chatter to one another. Even when they're miserable, as they mostly are, they love to gabble about blood and pain and operations with instruments . . . they frighten me with their talk, that's why I wouldn't let Lucia go to the clinic."

"You're overworked, Teresa. You used not to be upset by the clinic." He could see that it was the Murcian's demands on her which had given her this new fear. She really loved Martinez then.

"No . . . I wasn't afraid then. Don't think me wicked, boy, I love them as I ought even though it's all so horrible. But if I have a baby I want to feel all . . . all white and shining."

"But Lucia was happy all through."

## LEAN MEN

"I know, that's what is so marvellous, and she couldn't even have the right things to eat."

"You have to see each case from the inside, it's hard, I know. I am a blackguard to some, you know me from the inside. Tex might appear unkind to Lucia, you know him. If your turn came you wouldn't be outside yourself, watching yourself without understanding. Can you understand what I mean?"

"Yes . . . I'd like one, perhaps two babies."

"Well, you could love him and not have children at all if you wished not."

"Yes, and sneak round dirty streets to buy prostitutes' articles, or take drugs like hundreds of others do when they get frightened or too poor."

"I know, it's bad in this country."

"If he could only love me as you do."

"But I don't really love you, Teresa."

"But you care about me."

"Not the way that will bring any more Reds into the world. But read his letter again, don't you see how he feels about you?"

The girl took the letter and re-read it and read it again.

"Don't you see that Alonso is like me, better than I am, he hasn't profligated; I haven't been above that."

"Hasn't he been with women?"

"Yes, I know he has . . . at times. Not since March when you came down to the Centre. Does it make any real difference?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "Not a tiny bit."

"Let's go to Mariscal to-morrow; he advises his rich patients, I know."

She did not respond.

"For the rest it's just cowardice, cowardice before life, Teresa. Life is a little revolution in your own being. You meet—there's your problem; you love . . . the struggle is implanted in your body. It grows, racks, throbs, pains, leeches your blood, but you love it, see its beauty as we've grown to see the loveliness of this struggle we're engaged in. There's no solving that problem nor healing of the struggle—you can't reform a child into the world. It fights its way out of your flesh, weeps at birth and turns at once towards the

## CALL TO BATTLE

light and then to your breast. It's a life and death struggle until the revolution of birth is over, and then it's all constructive labour, nine months of preparation and evolution if you like, then a sharp hour of conflict, then years of evolution again. Life is built on that plan, there's no dodging ten million years because of fear. It may look unlovely in the clinic, dear, but then—our effort is thought criminal by most. Yet *we* are the true believers in Life. Doesn't that make it clearer?"

"Yes."

"You know how Alonso loves you, tenderly, that's one half of the problem. If you want your marriage to be different from those you see at the clinic, you must see to it you make your effort to keep pure. A man daft enough to get excited about a bird or a cherry tree is as pure as doesn't matter."

"Let's lie down again, Francis. . . . Would it be wrong to go to Mariscal for advice? I'm not so afraid now."

"No, to conceive without plan is just like anarchism, that's planting the struggle every time you feel a little elevated. Good Bolsheviks choose the time when things are just right."

"Is Pere right, do you think?"

Philosophical and political arguments often end in sleep. However, these debaters were more honest than the majority; after falling asleep they ceased to dispute.



## CHAPTER XXX

### RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE

THE pair of candelabras certainly looked very effective in their places one on each side of the altar.

"Consider the lilies how they grow," murmured Canon Faixal poetically. "What a chaste design!"

"It's a very old design, your reverence, a candelabra like this stands in the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem, it dates from when the commerce of Catalunya spread all over the Levant."

"Ah, yes, in the fourteenth century. So this is a copy of that candelabra, is that so? You have rescued the design from heathendom as it were."

"Yes, father, but that had three tiers of lilies and this only two . . . you see."

"Quite so, Señora, the expense—I mean . . . the cold winds of adversity . . . er—are unfavourable to a profusion of blooms. But how chaste!"

"Huy." Catarina shrugged her shoulders as she stuffed the dusters into their work-basket.

"Your husband has certainly produced a worthy piece of work, Señora."

"Yes, but . . ."

"It weren't Señor Trepas," said Catarina, blinking through lowered eyebrows. "Enrique the foreman made it for us."

"Ah, well, the House of Trepas, then; congratulations are due none the less, ladies. Well now, I must be hurrying, it is nearly lunch time and my housekeeper . . . h'm . . . pardon me, Señorita, I forgot the rôle you fulfil in your mistress's household—I was about to say my housekeeper is a fearful old scold."

"Huy," shuddered the servant as the canon swished away with especial majesty.

## RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE

Doña Agata was very relieved that the canon had gone; Catarina's remark might have been followed up by the immodest statement that they themselves had skimped and squeezed to buy the iron which Enrique had so generously volunteered to work up for them. Her servant would never allow even a good soup to pass without a word of acknowledgment. It was a little failing of hers that she liked her virtues to be recognized, briefly but unequivocally. But how nicely the candelabras suited the chapel and how pleasant Dr. Faixal had been. But then he always had been. He had never referred openly to their bankruptcy, and he frequently complimented their little guild of four on the cleanliness of the chapel. Doña Caritat and Julia also esteemed the canon highly for his urbanity.

"We must make haste, Señora." The servant rudely broke in on her contemplation of the candelabras.

"Yes, Catarina."

"Enrique will want his lunch early, there's a chance of some work down at the stables in Pine Street."

"Oh, yes, then we must hurry." She picked up her work-basket and followed the stalking Torrellana out of the cathedral. Enrique must not be delayed. Since they had left Cassadors Street, the foreman had been the mainstay of the forge, touting the whole of Casco Viejo and much of the new city for domestic and industrial jobs. Guillermo, too, had worked hard in his own way to keep them provided with work. A port contract had fallen to them partly through his influence and had done much to restore confidence to the household, although Gumer-sind had been so difficult about the chains. There was even a hope that they might pay a little off the load of debt which encumbered Trepas House itself, for that option had been left them by the creditors. The younger son also came at nights and assisted them with the lighter work.

When Doña Agata reached the cloister she found that Catarina was talking vehemently to Guillermo. Ricardo was standing a little behind his brother.

"He's an animal, a beast and no Christian, there's no soul in him," Catarina was almost shouting. "Come on down to the house, Guillermo," she concluded mysteriously, without explaining her anger to her mistress. Catarina was in a tremendous temper, she could see, a salvo of rapid "Huys" echoed down the cloisters.

## LEAN MEN

Doña Agata walked behind with her younger son. Ricardo kept a few paces aloof to one side of them. She was nervous of her elder son after what Gumersind had reported about him, yet secretly she wished she could see her grandson, just once at least. Julia had seen him several times, and had cried when she had questioned her about the boy and his mother. It was lonely to have no boy in the house at all. The temporary smithy which they had rented for the Torrellas contract work had only two rooms attached to it and her younger son had been compelled to seek lodgings elsewhere. How fortunate it was that they had paid the six months' rent in advance, and that Guillermo's new post as some kind of secretary to a senior administrator or something in the department of . . . she never could remember those curious unmeaning terms—would allow him to pay the further rent until they had sufficient business.

Guillermo was also in a funny temper, it seemed, and would not speak to her. Before they turned the corner of the street in which the smithy lay, he remarked curtly that he and Ricardo were taking an *apéritif* at the café near the barber's and would be along directly.

Don Gumersind was barking at Catarina in the apartment which served them as dining-room and the daughter and servant as sleeping quarters.

"I'll have no interference from you or any other woman in this house," he was saying when she entered.

"Then if you don't answer me I leave the house at once."

"Gumersind, what is the matter?" she faltered.

"Be quiet, Agata."

"Shut up." The servant was even ruder than her husband.

"Answer me, man, hast thou received the packet from Don Guillermo?"

"Don't you 'thou' me, woman; don't you dare use 'thees and thous' to me."

"Answer me, beast, animal," shouted Catarina, hammering the table with her huge dry hand.

The smith remained silent, struggling between rage and astonishment.

"Listen, heathen. I've been in this house thirty-one years come November, and not a rag or a stick can I call my own to this day. Do you think I'm going to stand this from a man

## RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE

who's fooled away his business, fooled away the shelter from his own head and from mine too? Where do I go if we go into bankruptcy again? Who's to shelter me or give me to eat? Answer me that, heathen. If no one else will speak, I will—answer me—have you received it? Have—you—received it!”

“Yes.” The smith's voice was leaden.

“Three days ago, and you haven't told us, nor written to the children of your own flesh who've pledged the next three years of their lives for the house you tossed away like . . . like a slop of soup. Thou art a brute, Trepát! Huy!”

The servant flung the door open. “Enrique, fetch the young masters.”

Don Gumersind Trepát sat down at the table and toyed at the leather hand-guard he had been wearing for the chain-making when Catarina had burst into the smithy. The two sons entered.

“Well, Father?” Guillermo's tone was conciliatory.

“Speak up, man, answer him,” the servant ejaculated fiercely.

The smith sprang to his feet. “Out of here, out I say, virago, harridan, get back to your village.”

“Gumersind . . . dear.”

“Get out of here, you're done with, beg your shelter, beg your food! Thirty years! Thirty seconds is too long . . .”

“Father.” The musician spoke calmly.

“No father to you, fornicator.”

Guillermo dashed the chair between them to the ground. “See here, sir—you're my father . . . and old . . . say that again and I'll strike you across the face.”

“Get away, Guillermo.” Catarina's order stayed the hand as he lifted it.

“My son, oh, my little son,” wailed Doña Agata as the musician set the chair upright for her.

“Mother, let me explain.” Ricardo patted her on the shoulder. “Three days ago Guillermo and I paid the first instalment on the redemption bond for the house in Cassadors Street. We sent it to father with a letter. I may as well tell you that we put certain conditions before father, about the modernization of the business and my brother's place in it. We came here this morning because we have received no

## LEAN MEN

reply. Enrique told my brother that you had gone to the cathedral, and that is why we went there for you."

"And you've got to sign that paper." The servant's voice was softer. The smith remained silent, staring at the table.

"Where is Julia, Mother? Let us have everyone present." Ricardo gently shook Doña Agata before she answered.

"She's at the printer's where she works; she doesn't leave there till half-past twelve."

"Very good, tell Enrique to fetch her."

"Enrique!" The foreman had been very near the door apparently. "You're to fetch the young mistress at once. Huy!"

"No, Catarina, I'll send the boy," faltered the smith.

"That's right, send the boy—this is your business as much as ours."

"Well, Master Guillermo, since you invite me, I'll stop. I don't deny as I know what's happening. Here, boy, go up to Paradise Lane and fetch the señorita; sharp's the word, too."

"Tell him Señor Trepas needs his daughter's presence, with apologies," added Ricardo.

"Now then, what about it?" Catarina spoke with fresh truculence.

"Father, I'm sorry I threatened you. I lost my temper, I beg your pardon."

"You threatened your *father* . . . lifted your hand to him." The master smith whispered the accusation.

"I've asked you to forgive me."

"Forgive him, Señor, he's done enough for you."

"Be silent, harridan."

"Oh, well, be damned to you—to hell with you and your house." The son turned away in sullen rage.

"Why don't you say yes, Gumersind? Guillermo's right about the business."

"It's not that, Agata—I won't take the deeds, I won't have this. . . ." Trepas senior shouted, unable to find a termination.

"What reason have you then, Father, answer me? We're not asking you to sign any paper, as Catarina suggested. All we wish you to do is to give us a promise."

The master smith looked up at his elder son with a look of contempt.

## RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE

"Why don't you accept our offer, Father?"

"Because I'll take nothing from you, fornicator. Keep your money for your bastard son."

"Very good. I withdraw my offer to you." Guillermo spoke peremptorily but without anger. "We shall continue with the purchase of the house and let it as it stands. It's well equipped, we shall have no trouble in finding a smith to take it."

"Master Guillermo," protested Enrique, "you can't do that."

"I can and I will, the redemption bond is in my name. I am the legal owner of the house."

"There's no need to threaten, brother."

"I'm not threatening, Ricardo. How else can we make both ends meet? Let as a house it wouldn't fetch enough."

"Don Gumersind, I've worked all my life for the house . . ." the foreman pulled his scale-speckled spectacles down from his forehead and took a double thickness of his leather apron between his hands. Trepas senior silenced him with a gesture, and turned to the musician.

"Do you deny that you have a son? You've been seen on the Rondas with a child and a woman." The remark began sullenly and ended as a fierce accusation.

"The mother of my son? Yes, why should I deny that?"

"Your wife?"

"No."

"Ricardo, my son—you will marry her won't you?" Doña Agata began to weep.

"I cannot Mother—I want to marry her—let me explain afterwards."

"So. Adultery!" snarled Don Gumersind. "I am asked to take back my house from an adulterer. There never was a stain like that upon our house before."

"Don't be such a damned romantic fool," snapped the younger son from the doorway. "What do you know of the morals of three and a half centuries of men?"

"Father, I must ask you to be patient and wait for an explanation. This is not the time and place to give it. Despite what my brother has said, I know your offer is still open . . . and will be. If you won't do it for your own sake, accept for mother's and Julia's. You've got her future to think of as well as your own."

## LEAN MEN

"Señor, Master Ricardo's right." Catarina spoke as if suddenly aware of something terribly urgent. "You can't leave Julia out of this, she can't marry any Tom, Dick or Harry."

"The disgrace . . . the dishonour of it all."

"There's no dishonour. Listen, Father. If Christ Himself, if Holy Church has absolved me, what does it matter to you what I have done?"

"Holy Church?"

"I know you think nothing of that, but . . ."

"You've been to confession?"

"And have been absolved. I have told you I will give you an explanation later. I'll tell you that I have not committed adultery, that my confessor knows that I associate with the mother of my son and has advised me to do so. I shall marry her as soon as I can, as soon as. . . . But I'm not asking *your* forgiveness, I'm offering you something for the sake of our house, my mother, Julia and my brother. My future is my own affair. I am confident of it without your help or of any business. . . ." Throughout this speech anger had been rapidly filtering into Ricardo's voice. Doña Agata looked up at him apprehensively.

"My boy, don't be angry."

"Be quiet, Mother. If you had spoken before, stood up to him before, all this might not have happened."

"There is no need to shout insults at your mother." Don Gumersind's voice, though sharp, had lost its scorn.

The apprentice returned and tapped on the door jamb.

"Yes?" Enrique turned to the lad.

"Please, sir, Señor Fuster says he's sorry but he can't oblige Señor Trepát."

"What! . . . The upstart presumptuous little runt," breathed the master smith into his beard. "He talks like that to *me*, does he!"

"Well, what are *you*, now?" Guillermo exclaimed scornfully.

"What am I?"

"Look here, sir." The foreman smith threw his apron to the floor. "I've been asked into this, so let me have a say. Don Gumersind, I ask you, sir, is this kind of work good enough for us? Is it good enough for *me*? Do you think

## RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE

this is the class of work *I* ought to be doing, sir? Why can't we go back and turn out something more like it than these . . . damn knick-knacks and odds and ends, chains and things? Why not, sir?"

The smith was shaking with excitement. Trepat senior pressed his lips together.

There was a movement in the smithy, the door opened and Julia entered; she had been running.

"Father . . . oh!" the daughter stared round at the group. "I thought you were ill. Señor Fuster wouldn't let me go—so I ran out."

"You ran out, daughter?" Doña Agata gazed apprehensively at the girl.

"I thought something was the matter," she faltered. "Señor Fuster told me not to come back any more."

"There, there, that's all right, don't cry, my girl." The master smith fondled his daughter's head. "You needn't go back to that . . . butcher's pigstye."

"Señor Trepat! For the Virgin's sake," pleaded Catarina.

"All right . . . I promise." Don Gumersind addressed the servant directly.

"Father—you mean it, you promise?" burst out Guillermo.

"Yes."

"Glory be to God!" ejaculated the servant and went to the sideboard and pulled out the knife basket and the serviettes. "Huy!"

The foreman pushed his spectacles up on to his forehead and wiped the perspiration from his face. "Hey, you boy, get off to your lunch at once," he shouted as he left the room.

"As soon as the work warrants my doing so I'll come back to the smithy, Father. Think of it, what we shall turn out! That Torrellas stuff will look like foundry work beside the next contract."

"T-t-t, boy! The Torrellas. . . . But you really mean that? You'll take up the tools again?"

"The design flows out of the tools and the stock, Father, in everything."

The elder son stepped forward a pace. "Well, Father, I must be going to lunch. Guillermo will arrange the few details." The musician put out his hand. Don Gumersind



## LEAN MEN

slowly took it in his grasp, he seemed apprehensive of hurting its unprofessional softness.

"Yes . . . of course . . . er, thank you, thank you very, very much." He shook the hand again and released it suddenly.

"There's no need to cry now, Agata, there, there, hammers, girl, why all this fuss, it's all settled. Catarina will go up to see the tenants at Cassadors Street this afternoon, to Trepas House, dear. I expect she'll persuade them to let us have the place at once."

"Yes, Gumersind, I expect she will," replied Señora Trepas with tearful certainty.

"Hammers and cold setts, girl, this won't do. Guillermo will be back presently with the champagne, you don't want him to see you still crying, do you?"

"No, Gumersind."

"Stop crying, then, why, bless my heart, you cry at everything I say."

"Yes—no, Gumersind."

"Gumersind this, Gumersind that! It must be my name, why of course I *am* Señor Don Gumersind Trepas y Bages. How astonishing!"

"Don't be cross, dear."

"I'm not cross, only don't keep on crying so much, Agata. You're upsetting me."

"I'm sorry, Gumersind."

"Oh, sulphur and coke, listen, I have an idea."

Señora Trepas looked up tearfully.

"Now it's a splendid idea, a little present for you, my dear."

"For me?"

"Yes. This is what it is. That work up at Torrellas all comes back to me now under the redemption bond. The courts have decided in favour of the creditors."

"Yes, dear. You can't sell it, though."

"Some of it we can, but we can do better than that." The master smith was as excited as his younger son had been. "I happened to be in the cathedral a few days ago."

"In the cathedral, dear?" If her husband had said "in a music hall" she could not have been more astonished.

## RESTORATION OF TREPAT HOUSE

"In the cathedral, I said, a large church up the slope yonder, where the Bishop has his seat. Well, I chanced to have a look at that chapel Enrique was making the candelabras for."

"Then you knew that, dear?"

"Yes." I wasn't supposed to know, was I? The apprentice told me, I . . . er . . . wanted to be sure it would be suitable. Now I think with a little judicious work on the anvil—it will have to be *very* judicious, of course. . . ."

"Of course, Gumersind."

"Of course what, girl?"

"I mean . . . of course, judicious, dear."

"Ha! With a little judicious work I think we could make some of the Torrellas work fit that chapel—somewhat an improper procedure, I fear, but there! You've got some perfectly horrible stuff up there now, like brass chitterlings if I may say so."

"My dear, do you really mean it? You'll give it to me?"

"Well, you can make an offering of it to the cathedral, if you like. How's that for an idea! Hammers, girl, will nothing put an end to this blubbing, that is *not* a handkerchief, it is *my* napkin."

Señor Trepát carefully folded the napkin in the triangular shape which distinguished his from the others, a feat he had learned from a waiter at his club.

"There, that's nicely folded, don't you think?" he said, propping it against the wine porron. Doña Agata made no reply.

"H'm—oh by the way, I quite forgot, do you think you could invite . . . er . . . why not invite Ricardo to lunch . . . shortly?"

"Yes, Gumersind, he's outside in the street, talking to Julia."

"Well, well, why not call him in, Agata? The boy will be . . . h'm, hungry I expect. Tell Catarina to lay another place."

"She's laid it, husband . . . oh dear, I haven't tried the soup."

## CHAPTER XXXI

### OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

NINE pounds six shillings and sevenpence halfpenny. It had cost the Civil Governor no more than this sum to put an end to the metallurgical strike.

Upon the afternoon of the third day the Governor had called together the representatives both of the Syndicate and of the Masters' Federation. These had been invited to confer among themselves in separate rooms preparatory to a joint discussion, and once in occupation of them had been made prisoners, or rather "not detained, gentlemen, but retained, until you reach agreement."

Ugarte, an employee of the administration, had travelled backwards and forwards like a shuttle all night between the two rooms, acting as courier. At nine the Governor had informed both parties that they might dine at his expense.

Bitter argument was still being waged about the morality of the gorgeous banquet the workers' representatives had ordered, it had broken out among the delegates themselves within the retention room. "Say what you like," Lliteras, nicknamed "The Bull" because of certain phenomenal capacities, had summed up, "but since we can't eat outside I'm going to yank my gut out of trouble right here."

The employers had dined frugally. Breakfast, too, had been at the Governor's expense. This was of course more consistent with anarchist principles, there was consequently less argument about breakfast, after which articles were signed.

Within the ranks of anarchism struggle was again proceeding. On the 30th of August a manifesto had appeared deploring in effect the present tactic of useless revolt and apparently directed as much against the F.A.I. as other bodies. Among the signatories were Pestaña and Peiró. A day later a disguised retraction had appeared, this time specifically mentioning the Socialists and Communists as being elements dangerous

## OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

to the proper life of the syndicates. The syndicates should direct their revolutionary work without interference from outside political parties.

Every member of the Centre, the official Communist Party, and the Workers' and Peasants' Block was a member of the syndicates. Every signatory of the manifesto belonged to the F.A.I. The argument was, of course, consistent with anarchist logic. The discussion only served to raise the temper of insurrection. The revolution would break out about the end of September, reasoned Pere ; they must plan accordingly.

By a large majority Francis was elected secretary of the military committee. Hitherto the barricade had been the symbol of revolution. It was necessary to disabuse themselves, he argued ; the barricade imposed immobility and a defensive character on the struggle, it was the symbol and tactic of despair. The committee proceeded to draw up a plan of campaign based upon a modern understanding of street fighting.

During these days sleep disappeared from their routine ; there was little time, therefore, for broader reflection. At moments, however, it seemed to Francis that the whole affair was desperately fantastic, mad. At these moments the Party with its steady influence seemed countless horizons away.

When Francis and Texido arrived at the Polar Bear Café that night the party had already begun ; upon the floor of the salon, cleared of chairs, a few couples were waltzing to Vilanova's bronchial performance on a piano accordion. They walked past the "decoration," as these festivities were called, and joined the military committee, already sitting at the back of the room. With a sagging drawl in its output Vilanova returned the instrument to its owner, a half-blind street performer they had engaged, and joined them.

The long and obscure night of the Polar Bear had seen two such sudden displays of stellar glory in the past week. At night, when the committee met, a dancing party and sing-song was organized and "presented" to the neighbours by strangely named and very fugitive societies such as the Friends of Exquisite Melody or the Jovial Defenders of the Dance. Response to these invitations was always enthusiastic, all night there would be gaiety and good humour in the café, under cover of which the slipping in and out of the contacts and the

## LEAN MEN

incessant discussion of the committee passed unnoticed. The proprietor, who professed complete scepticism about all things worldly and extra-worldly when first sounded, was profiting greatly, though as Francis thought, he was violating the very *raison d'être* of scepticism, by taking risks. This risk was lessened, however, by the fact that it was the season of "street feasts." In Barcelona, as in every other Spanish town and city, it was the custom for the inhabitants of a street to subscribe together for this feast. An orchestra would be hired, a cart or wagon to serve as bandstand, a multitude of paper chains, flags and banners hung out or stretched across the street; and then upon the appointed day the celebration would begin with an overture from the orchestra, perhaps of one piano, a violin and a cornet, or more according to the size and wealth of the street. After this overture the orchestra would go from house to house collecting presents or offerings of money, and then the dancing would begin. Up and down the length of the street, oblivious of ancient cobbles and the suffocating atmosphere, the "collas" of sardana dancers or groups of waltzers would extend, while the orchestra, liberally assisted with iced wines, coffee, liqueurs, spirits, cigars and such like offerings, would play ever louder and louder, until at about three or four in the morning, when the grey light of the sky began to rob the paper lanterns and fairy lights of their brightness, the feast would conclude, formerly with hymns and a special mass, but nowadays more probably with the hymn of Riego or some more modern revolutionary song.

The street in which the Polar Bear stood was already decorated for its feast. Its entire length was roofed with a lattice of red and yellow paper strips, which by day threw a wicker-like shadow upon the cobbles and by night permitted the barred infiltration of the lights from first floor flats or the high moon. It was not remarkable, therefore, that music and laughter in unusual degree should emerge from its golden cavern, for when the Chinese lanterns were lit after dark the stroller who passed by in the gloom of the next street suddenly walked into another world of light and fantastic beauty in which song came naturally to the lips.

It was unsafe to rest at home these days. Taulat Street had been visited twice by agents and once by police. Teresa, Texido and Francis had been forced to disappear, and Tia

## OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

Benita had grown accomplished in the art of being obscurely witted. Lucia was too ill to answer her inquisitors' questions intelligently. Each of the leaders elected some fresh hiding-place by night in which to snatch a few hours' sleep. Since his arrest Francis had barely been able to emerge by day without vigilance. There had been a further attempt on Pere's life, though in this case there was reason to believe that it was a mistaken attempt at mere banditry, a crime growing more and more frequent every day.

The tasks this evening were to draw up a classification of street routes by which a body of men or a single man might most safely cross the city in time of struggle; to organize the training of guides who should know these routes intimately, and be able to foresee ambush and surprise throughout their length, and to distinguish favourable and unfavourable spots for giving and taking engagement. Day by day the "staff work" arrangements were being perfected, for nothing was to be left to haphazard chance. Memory tests based upon the most recent psychological work of Pear and Burt and the Americans were used in selecting couriers able safely to dispense with written messages. Adaptations of the platoon advance in open field, learned by Francis during the War, were being worked out by means of "manœuvres." Even the possibility of gas being used by the authorities was not neglected. A leaflet on the construction of rough masks from tins, gauze and the best fuel carbon broken into small pieces was issued. Such a home-made mask was tested by several of the chemical industry members on chlorine and strong ammonia. They were sufficiently effective for an emergency.

These various tasks were being worked upon at some five or six tables by about a score of members, with frequent consultation between all of them.

About eleven o'clock the salon began to be uncomfortably crowded, and then suddenly a huge burst of laughter interrupted them just as they were disputing a fascinating point of orderly advance along a narrow street.

Alonso left the tables and made his way to the counter, upon which he climbed.

"It's an old fellow with a set of puppets," he said on his return. "He's playing a murder scene or something."

"Now your point is that not enough cover-fire can be

## LEAN MEN

concentrated on the enemy to guarantee the advance of the party on the other side of the road."

"Yes, I think it's best that both files should advance at a running pace, pressing close to the wall as before, but keeping level with one another. It's more confusing to the enemy than the infantry system of covering-fire and alternate advances."

"Why do you think that?"

"Well, only the head of the file can open fire, or say the first two, those behind stand in danger of hitting their own leaders if they fire from doorways."

Again there was a shout of laughter and a burst of clapping. Then the piano accordion burst into an exhilarating sardana. They stopped a moment to listen. This was a different performer, clearly; the half-blind mendicant could never achieve that splendid precision of rhythm. A professional from some *Café Espagnole* in Paris, he turned out to be, called home by the hope of revolt. "Tum-tum-tum Tum-tum-tum Tum," went the bass chords of the dance. It was the "Enamoured Knight" of Manén, still popular with sardana dancers. The company took up the words of the dance and within a minute the committees could not hear themselves speak for the voices singing about the knight, stainless and without fear, who gazed with yearning at the impregnable castle in which dwelt the lady to whom he had lost his heart.

"Of a white maiden he suffers the yoke, so sadly lost in love. . . ."

"What's that? But you don't need much cover-fire, two are sufficient."

"Around the castle the dark moat goes, and nightly, courageless he roams. . . ."

"Yes—but in a narrow street. . . ."

"Ay, maiden what hast thou made of his heart. . . ."

"A narrow street—you can't tell from which side the fire proceeds."

"A time will come when too thou shalt be sad. . . ."

"Hell, I said a *narrow* street."

"Narrow Street?"

When the sardana had finished another followed without words, and then the player broke into a song. There was a laugh at the tables this time, the verses were Alonso's satirical

## OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

history of recent events. Francis noticed how Teresa, most attentive of members, listened to the singer in preference to Texido. They all listened when the familiar points were approached. The roaring ballade of the Bishops and Our Lady of Montserrat was next begun. Alonso stood up to watch the singer, while Vilanova and Martellat joined in teasing the girl for her blushing admiration of her betrothed lover. The singer caught sight of the Murcian.

"Hola, maestro," he shouted. "Friends, the poet himself, the composer of the song I've just got off my chest."

There was a toast and affectionate salutes to the docker, the poet of the desperate and hungry masses of Barcelona and already something of a myth.

They sat down to their tables again as the accordionist began the lovely "Zapateado" of Turina. Now Francis could not close his ears to the music. The piano accordion might be a poor instrument, designed to compete with the rattle of cups and glasses, but nothing could mar the sadly sweet upward soar of the "bien chantée" melody and its wavering curve over into the wistfulness of the spirit entrapped in flesh, the eternal theme of the *flamenco*. At the finish there was a unanimous demand for and a repetition of appeals to one "Lola" to dance. A little Andaluza, full of malicious appeal, began to interpret the Zapateado; her dance was punctuated by spontaneous "Olés." The accordionist switched into the indolent Tango, the first of Turina's three dances, the Andaluza keeping the floor.

Martellat apologized to the committee and left them to watch the dancer, several others joined him despite protests. During the comparative quiet of these dances they were able to clear up several important points of tactics, and then at the finish of another dance there was an angry shout from some of the men around the dancer.

"Outside with her," someone shouted. There was a smothered scream from a friend of the girl. Mild commotion followed. Francis, Texido and Alonso made their way over to the place of disturbance.

"She's a prostitute, it turns out," explained Martellat. "She got a bit excited and spun round till you could see she'd got the padded slips on, she's from a house at the back of this, they say."



## LEAN MEN

"We don't want you mixing with decent women," the objector was saying.

"Aw, what does it matter?" contested the singer. "The kid's doing no harm."

"We were invited to bring our sisters and women-folk."

"Well, she won't bite 'em, will she?"

The two girls objected to made their exit and subdued controversy broke out. Some of the company began to leave.

"A song, *maestro*," called the singer to Alonso. "My friend the barrel-organist will accompany you." The accordionist executed a flourish.

"You'll have to forgive me, I can't sing," protested the Murcian.

"Song! Song!" The shouts of "song" came from all parts of the room.

"I'm sorry, I can't sing, but I'll recite one of my ballades, if you like, friends."

"Give us one of the good old bawdy ones," called a voice from behind the press. There was general laughter and sundry appeals.

"A little bit of sauce with it, *maestro*."

The Murcian enjoyed his popularity, they could see. He gave them the "Cardinal's Sickness," a scandalous commentary on Cardinal Segura's attempt to evade expulsion from Spain by pleading sickness, undiscoverable by the doctors who had examined him.

"Now something more serious, Martinez." The speaker was an elderly man accompanied by his wife. "Give us the Way of the Red Cross!"

There was an immediate hush. The grim Via Crucis, which Alonso had never even written down, had become since its composition two months or so ago, a legend among the classes just removed from the poorest among whom they lived. Occasional references to it were seen in the press. Guillermo Trepat had asked Francis if he could obtain a copy. Pious journals referred vaguely to a poem of terrible blasphemy circulating among the haunts of vice and iniquity.

In the Via Crucis was nothing of ribaldry nor wit nor humour, its attack was thrustful, merciless and bitter, its atmosphere one of stark tragedy. In form it consisted of twelve meditations upon the Stations of the Cross, the language and methods of

## OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

the average priest being exactly copied. In substance it was the story of the sufferings of a Murcian mother and son, and was an exact history from Archiviel, Alonso's home town.

It had never been committed to paper because Alonso distrusted his powers at this early stage of development, and also because it suited his own method of delivering it to leave it fluid. Only once had Francis heard the *Via Crucis*; it had been almost a terrifying experience. The lean figure and haggard face of the poet, exhausted with poverty and ceaseless labour to master the art that was consuming him, had seemed literally to glow with some strange radiation of personality. The trembling body and penetrating gaze filled with restrained ferocity had held him completely enthralled.

Upon this occasion Alonso got no further than Number Eleven, *Our Lady of Tuberculosis*. At that point the wife of the elderly man who had suggested the *Via Crucis* suddenly collapsed and had to be carried out. The pure and serene Transfiguration which Alonso had recently substituted for the gloomy Number Twelve was never delivered. The first verses of each section, in level metres, were delivered in a monotone such as the clergy used in saying Collects, though much higher in pitch; the remainder like the devotional commentary which follows each Station.

*At noon when they had lit the yellow wax  
haggled these three days past with borrowed pence,  
the eldest there went down to that parched field  
whose dusts His faltering share had lately scratched.  
And there She sat beneath the fig's hot shade,  
mourning not, weeping not, nor with wild eyes  
gazing at the fierce foundry of the hills  
whence they had borne Him coughing to his bed,  
but watching a stumbling beetle in the dust  
bead the blood-red grains with glistening purple.  
And spitting, the elder wiped thin sweat away  
and said "He's dead" and climbed the hill again.  
Ah, weep not woman, but spill the dust  
Rust-red of iron hills and ashen field  
through hard, cracked fingers, dry as the heart.  
Weep not, nor gaze on sharded hills whose rocks  
shall never cool thy burning forehead's pain.*

## LEAN MEN

*For these death-stricken hills mourn not nor weep,  
though fiercer fever rack them, knowing well,  
though stone, how the sweet Christ of tears and rain  
most mercifully hath conquered Death.*

*The tall figs that cluster against the red cliff's base, being  
untended by any, bear no pulpy fruit ; their fruit is grace.  
Beneath the tent of varnished leaves there stands the Shrine of  
La Dolorosa, Mother of Sorrows, who suffered all sorrow.*

*Within her cell of grey stone washed with blue lime, behind her  
grille of beaten iron she stands, her robe the hue of a March  
sky's lowest rim, a crown of pale gilt upon her  
inclined head. The pious have put copper coins at her feet.*

*There is grace, O heart, in the gaze of her sweet face, those  
eyes, O heart, have beheld all sore things that may afflict  
a mother. She in her shadow-flecked cell awaits this  
woman who stumbles hither from the town, and kneels at  
evening time to plead the grace of tears.*

*" O Mother of Sorrows console me, turn thine eyes of infinite  
pity upon me, for my son is dead. Thou who lovedst thy Son  
and took His body in thine arms, hear me, who have borne  
the weight of his body, being dead."*

*The fig trees fan cool air about her fevered head, the  
pale violet shadows shift upon the flagstones of the shrine,  
the sunlight flings a handful of gold coins through the grille,  
the sweet face of La Dolorosa, inclined towards this woman,  
lightens with a smile. Her eyes averted the woman does not  
perceive the sign of grace.*

*" O Mother of Sorrows console me, take me to thy compassionate  
arms, for thou hast suffered all, even this affliction. . . ."  
The worn book slips from her hand and lies black upon the  
grey flags.*

*" O Mother . . . thou hast suffered all, yet, thy child an angel  
foretold, appearing brightly before thee, and mine, O woman  
chosen of God, thou knowest was laid upon me by man. O sister  
sorrower, Mary, have me, reach out thine hand and touch me.  
Touch me as these women of the town touch me, though their  
touch avail not. . . ."*

## OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

*The wind stirs the glistening leaves of the fruitless figs,  
the sunlight flings golden alms to La Dolorosa and she  
smiles with light over the unseeing head.*

*"O Sister Mary, hear me . . . all things thou has suffered,  
they say . . . forgive me O Mother of God. . . . From God thy child  
came, to God he went, this thou knewest. By the grievous  
stairway of the cross thy Son departed, treading the dark  
stairs three hours at the command of man. And you, sister,  
poor Mary, knew this, he died swiftly for truth's sake, to  
accomplish the miracle of salvation . . . and he whom I bore  
by the lust of man, suffered three years, with his own  
blood, frothed like madness, choked at the last . . . to pay  
a starveling's rent for fields that have not nourished.  
O woman, thou has not suffered."*

*Her hands bleed upon the grille, her eyes that have not  
wept weep now as she whispers "O Mary, I, La Dolorosa,  
pity thee"*

*The wind sighs among the fruitless figs. Surely  
now these barren trees beneath the red cliffs shall once  
more bear fruit for the grace of pity there given. Ah,  
sweet is La Dolorosa, they say within the town, see how  
the mourner returns, with Her mercy of tears.*

When the woman had been taken away, the accordionist led into the chorus of a popular song, and rapidly enough the company returned to its former gaiety. About half of the delegates stayed with the company. Half an hour later a sing-song was well under way, many of the songs being dances, couples came out from the ranks and performed, some expert executed a difficult solo. From time to time Alonso went over and contributed an opening line. The accordionist rarely failed to recall a tune. Of the Catalan songs, only Teresa's for the stick dance of High Llobregat was outside of his repertoire.

As the night advanced little by little the tables were deserted for the singing and dancing of the salon, till at last Texido, rising in mild disgust, said: "Look here, Martinez, either you're working with us or you're singing with the party, which is it?"

## LEAN MEN

"Rafael ! Why shouldn't I enjoy a sing-song ? "

" But why just now ? We haven't half done our work."

" Mayn't get a chance much longer, boy, there'll be some plunkers whizzing soon," laughed the Murcian, taking Teresa by the hand and joining in the leaping tune of the " Mountains of Canigó."

" Oh well, damn it," remarked Texido, " it's no use going on like this, shall we have a chant with them, Vila ? "

Now the company was singing the " Little Mornings of May," that most beloved of all Catalan songs.

*Oh the dear little mornings of May  
When the air is a crystal wine  
The small bird maketh sweet joy  
With his warbling so fine  
And the night's cool hissing  
Maketh the green fields shine.*

" So you've put up your flaming sword, Rafael," shouted the Murcian between the verses. " You look after your Eve or you'll be flung out of Paradise ! " replied Texido.

Alonso pretended to faint. " Oh, succour me, Tex has made a joke ! "

*How happy is this early morning  
Of singing throats and flashing wings  
How sweet to breathe the perfume  
Of clustered pines the fresh breeze brings  
While far off in the echoing valley  
A labouring peasant sings.*

*How beautiful to walk this morn  
Of scented crystal air  
Across the flowered meadow  
To see the white flock cropping there  
Where softly the cool stream murmurs  
Between its banks so green and fair.*

After this there was no more talk of work ; a huge game of trippy-trap played with sets of blocks hastily fetched from

## OUR LADY OF TUBERCULOSIS

neighbouring houses, and then more sardanas and yet more songs, and then the concourse began to grow thin.

At half-past one the party broke up, Francis and Texido taking their papers with them, the former to the Plaza de Catalunya, where he proposed to sleep in the open with the unemployed and those too poor to care to pay for lodgings during the summer, the latter to a small vineyard patch on the outskirts of the city belonging to a relative, where he and Pere Camps intended to sleep. Alonso and Teresa went down to Commercial Basin and boarded one of the little fishing vessels whose owner had invited them to hide there.

The following morning, to his immense surprise, Francis received a letter from the International, wishing to know why he had not sent in his report for the month of July. Isidro Martinez, sent to find Quiñones, reported that he could not be traced, but with him returned the secretary of the official Party local, anxious to offer assistance in the name of his executive. It was as well for Quiñones that he was absent from Barcelona that day.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### VIGIL

THE cloister was beginning to empty, the last groups were edging little by little towards the doors. Would Alonso never come? Francis sat down by the baptismal registry and closed his eyes, too weary for sleep yet unable to adhere to the world of sensation.

There had been no resting in the Plaza de Catalunya. That afternoon some fool of an Englishman, the public school son of a resident director of a British gramophone firm, had taken part in a raid on the cashier's office at the Rheingold Café and had shot the cashier dead in the attempt. Captured and saved from lynching by the police at the risk of their own bodies, he was confronting life imprisonment, the Republic having abolished the death penalty. The result had been that the British passport had suddenly lost face with the police. When the officer had awakened him and demanded papers he had been too stupefied with fatigue and sleep to think, and had presented the passport. The officer, recently drafted into the city, fortunately had not recognized the name, or he would have called assistance, but he had asked questions and finally ordered Charing to accompany him to the station.

It was no fun to race across the Plaza, stiff and cramped with sleeping in a basket-chair, with bullets thwacking and whizzing round your heels and head, and then to choke in a garbage-filled warehouse alley, where the rats had no fear of human beings, for the rest of the night. And that fool of an Englishman had said he wanted the money to buy a small yacht in which to make a world tour.

For safety he had spent the day at Sardañola, organizing the shock corps at the Uralite works, and had returned to find the city trembling on the edge of revolt and the whole of their work endangered by premature explosion.

## VIGIL

At midday the Model Prison had been fired from within by the hunger-striking prisoners, while the Civil Governor himself was inspecting the building. Every door, shutter, trestle, plank and bench had been burnt by the hunger-strikers, converted from prostrate wrecks to maniac furies by the hysteria of revolt. With splendid restraint Anguera de Sojo had forbidden the troops and staff to fire upon the prisoners, many of whom were in "preventative detention," without hope of trial, by his own order. The disorder had been quelled without the loss of a single life.

At six o'clock, rumours. Santiago Bilbao, Tomasio Fulano, Carlos Zutano and many others had been foully put to death in the Model Prison by cold mandate of Anguera de Sojo. Paralelo had been flung into a fresh hysteria of excitement, the new city as well as the old clamoured for the dismissal of Anguera de Sojo.

At that moment, while Francis waited in the cloister, the Syndicates were preparing to launch a general strike which the Centre factions were struggling to hold back. Scores of arrests had been made, their men as well as the anarchists were being rounded up and packed into the Dédalo, the dreaded prison-ship of the harbour.

Alonso had gone for money and food ; he had spent his last peseta in returning from Sardañola. An hour and a half had passed and the Murcian had not returned.

In that tension it was impossible to rest. He went over to the fountain and bathed his face, opening his eyes under water that the cool liquid should refresh them, and returned to the steps. A clatter of rifle-butta outside the cloister gate alarmed him ; apparently a picket stood at each entrance. So that was why Alonso could not return, then ; probably there had been some attempt at church firing. From being one of the safest places in which to work, the cloister had become a trap. In a few minutes the verger would issue from the cathedral whence he had been expelled an hour ago, and shout for them to leave the cloisters before closing the gates. He would be compelled to run the gauntlet of the pickets ; the guards would certainly watch the closing out of natural curiosity. That meant the Dédalo. Well, well, it was an unpleasant manner of going to sea ; better take a last look at something lovely since there was nothing else to do.



## LEAN MEN

The basin of water with its quivering mercurial edges was beautiful; blessed be surface tension, he mused, or that bubbling of water into the bowl would not be half so beautiful. The palms were beautiful. He gazed awhile at the palm branches idly swaying against the sky, its blue softening into amethyst. Within the cloister deep shadows lay like the glooms under rock-shelves in a clear stream; the crystalline purity of the light, indeed, seemed to possess the limpidity of water. The torrent of Arazas, how far off it was now, the Astos stream in which . . . Elizabeth had bathed. A desolation of space and time suddenly came between the image of her body and his location of self.

Beauty could be a taunt when one must forgo it, as love, as friendship, as struggle. . . .

The rustling head of the palm lifted its very topmost brush into the mellowed light. Its hard dry blades sliding over one another made a quiet hissing when the breeze pressed upon them, or when they first dipped and then lifted as the air colliding with the great wall of the cathedral sank down into the well of the cloister.

He remembered how he had recommended the beauty of the world to Elizabeth as an antidote to grief. Was beauty a comfort? There was that aesthete of Hampstead, who had theorized so nicely about a society in which art should be predominant. Beauty could unite classes and at last form the bedrock of society, a sure anodyne for covetousness. Could the classes even unite in their judgment of beauty? It was hard for two persons to do so. These palms, for instance, would anyone else find beautiful that brush stroke of green-gold leaves against the mellowed smalt of the sky? Or so beautiful, even when they loved beauty, like that fanatic domestic emperor, Guillermo's father?

The cathedral door swung open and the first shout of "All out" resounded; the verger shuffled by to the Santa Lucía gate. He stood up, looked about him; decision must be immediate. He stepped through the cathedral door into the softly whispering darkness of the nave.

Once the church had granted sanctuary to fugitive knaves, he reflected; she had been deprived of that merciful right by cold secular power, she said. No doubt she would be grateful to have it restored for one night.

## VIGIL

They used to play marbles and dibs upon the tomb of Nathaniel Longland in St. Sampson's churchyard, he and the other boys of Church Lane. Kitty the wheelwright's daughter used to wait for him after school sitting on that tomb, although her mother said it was wrong to make a mock of poor dead men. Miller Brown's lusty boy had been caught fornicating upon that tomb by Mr. Threadgold himself, the vicar's churchwarden. Miller Brown had laughed until the flour "fell off on 'a like the dust o' the roa-a-ad off the locky dog." "Bwoys allus 'll be bwoys, Warden," Miller Brown had said.

Who was the prophet who stretched himself upon a dead man? Here you lie still, old boy, he whispered, tapping his stone bed.

Where was the clock whose ticking seemed now so loud?

A clock was mechanically an insignificant thing, a few trains of wheels, a pinion or two, an escapement, a spring, or if one were quaintly minded, a pair of weights in the shape of pine cones, which fitted the hand like the teats of a cow but which were cold. A clock was little by the side of the naked ardour of a modern locomotive. Yet that sorry juxtaposition of cogs and pinions was an instrument held against the very heart-beat of Reality, Time itself, while the locomotive battled only with poor idiot Space. The generations of the world would vanish before Time unrolled itself, the concept itself was beyond the courage of brave minds, while as in Martinez's poem of "The Nurse" the fallow acres of Immensity could seem subordinate to a tiny babe.

As by night the significance of love becomes clearer, the ticking of the clock, somewhere in the dark gulfs of space above him, seemed to swell in volume till it filled the whole cathedral; and then, as he contemplated the hyperbolic image it aroused, it ceased almost to be audible. The cathedral itself was a vast clock whose solemn recording of passage was inaudible to the normal ear. Yet the faint sighings of air and the hushed rustlings of disturbed minutiae which the exalted sense can always detect in the mute of silences, might almost be the crepitation of Time itself, embodied in these piers and walls and buttresses, the slow disintegration of molecules and the microscopic abrasion of substance which the least vibration of earth involves.

Silently the mighty structure was beating out the waning

## LEAN MEN

centuries of its life . . . and as radium at last disintegrates to lead, the glowing faith which had set it pulsing was ebbing away.

To lie one night upon a dead man's breast, possibly some bishop or inquisitor of the great days, meditating upon the nature of Time, was rather an aristocratic experience, he thought, similar to playing the archlute from its chancel steps, as once he had wished to do. A vigil before battle, it might be considered, and, if it were shorn of ceremonies, it was well to remember that the purest of knights had passed his watch in a miserable inn yard, the sheltering place that night of harlots going down the sad way to Sevilla. Yet that shrivelled madman Quijote had been nearer the true quest than the braggart crusaders whose arms were dewed with more costly chrysm than the chilled vapours of a dung heap.

It was neglect of opportunity not to walk about, he decided. He swung his feet to the ground and was almost surprised not to hear the clank of metal upon the flags. As he approached the door by which he had entered, the capitoline geese burst into a fierce cackle. Elizabeth's postscript had been two quotations from Lucretius *De Rerum Natura*, one of which referred to these geese. "Smell is caused by streams of particles which enter the nostrils, bees are drawn through the air to any distance by honey; from afar off the scent of man is caught by the white goose, preserver of the citadel of the Roman race."

"Go it, geese," he whispered. The authorities would probably dismiss the warning as the mere cackling of geese, he considered. Again the birds gabbled and screeched in the cloister. The echoes within the cathedral fluttered away into the remote vaults of the night.

Then a quaint conceit entered his mind. There was in this church a piece of ironwork which Trepas had chattered pontifically about half a dozen times, and which he had never seen: the pulpit staircase built by the German master Miquel Somebody and his Spanish pupil Juan Frederic in 1443. He would make a pilgrimage, for in that impenetrable darkness such it was. He would not be able to see the work, but that would not matter when it was the object of pilgrimage. It was half an hour later that he found the pulpit; his hands, lifted to the conjectured height, slid over the carved panels of

## VIGIL

Pedro Anglada. "Salute to a dead craftsman," he whispered, "by one living," and touched the wood again.

"Diagonal lattice work," he said aloud. "Masters Miquel and Juan, I pray you pardon the untechnicalities." A rope of velvety cord stretched across the pulpit steps, and feeling stealthily he unhitched it and laid it upon the floor. "And on the frame, little rosettes of leaves—the frame has scalloped edges." He felt along the cold metal. "Within the squares, or diamonds, Master John, for this detail was your department—are crossed loops like four-petalled flowers—and at the intersections of the squares, stars of four points, and by the Virgin, very sharp," he ejaculated, sucking the pricked finger.

The frame of the pulpit itself was bordered with metal. Even after four and a quarter centuries of use the pulpit did not creak beneath his usurpation. Was it usurpation? This was a vigil. And then suddenly his whole being was thrilled with fresh realization of the heart-quelling beauty of life. Life had dealt him great fortune. He might easily have been contentedly directing that warehouse which he had left for the Party service; might perhaps by now have risen to the respectable insignificance of senior manager, with a house in Hendon or Southgate and a small car—instead of being hunted and shot at for a political ruffian in this desperate Latin city. Nor had he been pitched into this battle by a blundering state in the hands of venal politicians, in order to bring into being the glittering chastity of endless peace conferences. (Oh pinnacle of contemporary glory!) Nor were their ranks applauded by the respectable and the esteemed and all those influences which made a reasonable valour easy to achieve.

Be serious with yourself, man, he said within himself, this is your vigil. Was there greed, envy, malice in his heart Conscience spoke clearly, No. He reflected again and added "or very little." There was no need for a man to abandon himself to passions, his objection to capitalism had been an affair of intellect chiefly, yet he knew now that hatred for injustice and oppression could be final and remorseless without passion. The world was too young to understand communism, perhaps; a communist might be either honest or intelligent, it thought, but not both. The world was ashamed of the doctrine of equality, yet it was that inescapable, undeniable ideal of all mankind which, unsatisfied, whispered in the heart

## LEAN MEN

of men and kept them in sickness, a profound malady of spirit which would last until mankind resolutely set about its great revolutionary task, of creating Life.

There was nothing more serene in life than to bear a blade, or a gun and a block of notepaper, he corrected, in a battle in which one wholly believed.

And after that, love. Who could know that loveliness so intimately as one who stood immersed in this pure but bitter tide? Life had been gracious to him with love.

The essence of a vigil was belief and a profession of service. Very well, then. He lifted his right hand with clenched fist in salute and said aloud, "I believe and I will serve." The echoes flew down the nave, turned aside into the chapels, soared aloft into the vaults above, returned and swept behind the altar, filling the whole cathedral. Belief and service should not desert the world even though old faiths died; and, feeling for that cold beauty of a past age, he put his hand upon the stair rail and descended the pulpit steps.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### TOO MUCH LEAD

WHEN Francis emerged from the cloisters he found the Civil Governor's proclamation already posted on the walls.

Baking, distribution of bread, milk, meat, vegetables, lighting and power services, collection of refuse, funeral and mortuary work, etc., were all declared of public necessity. In these departments strikes and interferences would all be considered punishable.

The answer was absolute paralysis of every activity. Not a shop, bakery, dispensary, factory or workshop was open. As Francis and Martinez had left the Polar Bear, where they had arranged to meet should overnight contact be missed, sharp firing had broken out in the next street. It looked as if the tragedy of waste were to be repeated. As he had suspected, it had been impossibly dangerous to enter the cloister once the pickets had been posted.

Texido remained behind at the Asland Cement Works outside the city, where they had gone in fulfilment of their normal programme. The workers there were intended to hold up the Northern Railway which ran past that factory. They had found the leaders of the faction and had borrowed bicycles on which to return to the city by way of Col Blanch.

The warning bullet hit the ground well ahead of Martinez's front wheel. They dismounted. The civil guard hurried up to them.

"Why the hell didn't you dismount when I shouted?"

"Didn't hear you, sorry."

"Didn't hear! God Almighty preserve your sense of hearing."

"Too much Mauser firing from your people," flared Martinez.

## LEAN MEN

"Let's see if you're carrying guns, keep them up."

"Where are you going?" questioned the civil after tapping their pockets.

"Home."

The firing at the Col Blanch barricade broke out again; with the noise of the Mausers were mingled the reports of other arms. The fight had begun in earnest. Around the church dense columns of smoke were rising. The ancient methods in the ancient place; early invasions of Barcelona had fought their way over the low Col Blanch, tragically the workers were repeating that tactic. With the same courage. Women were dragging out furniture to strengthen the barricade.

"Fling those bicycles on the pavement and get out of sight before I make you sing with a spot of lead."

They would be late for contact with Teresa at the sewer-way near Taulat Street. A rattle of machine-gun fire was sounding distantly on their right. Were the barracks being assaulted?

Martinez laughed suddenly.

"What's up?"

"I've just hit on the right way to serve up that ballade of mine, the one you saw in the rough, about the materials. I'm going to give each one, gold, silver and the rest, a rondelle. That'll keep the balance. There was too much lead before."

"Too much lead! That's what you call keeping the creative processes in contact with reality, I suppose."

Teresa was not in the appointed place.

"Wiped up?" questioned Alonso, pallor creeping over his face.

"No—her dive is the house if things go wrong."

"Chance it, Francis?"

"Have to . . . she'll be all right."

Teresa was not at Taulat Street. Tía Benita stormed at them for sending the girl out at all on a day like that.

"A kiddy found a box with two bombs in it out here on the waste land. They've taken that Roig away with two rifles," she said.

"Well the thing is, where is she? She had strict instructions to make this her dive if things got too hot."

"What about yourself, Francis?" continued Tía. "You look half dead, let me get you the kola and some aspirin."

## TOO MUCH LEAD

There was a feeble call from the front room where Lucia lay. Tía placed the stimulants on the table and hastened into the sick woman's room.

"She's afraid for Rafael," she said on her return. "She can hear the firing, though I've drawn the shutters and put the *persiana* over the door."

"What shall we do, Francis? Wait for the kid?" Alonso looked ill.

"We can spare half an hour—you've got to slip out to Vallvidrera at three, don't forget. God knows how you'll get there, though."

"I'll manage that, let's wait a while—oh, boy. . . ." The Murcian swayed and steadied himself against the table.

"I know how you feel. Don't worry, she'll be all right. She's seen plenty of excitement before."

"You must wait up in her room," Tía interposed. "Lucia can hear your voices."

At the end of ten minutes Tía came upstairs with lukewarm coffee and began to question them. Suddenly a terrific outburst of firing occurred, not short and separate as the others had been, but sustained and very loud, though clearly far off.

"Casco Viejo?"

"Yes. . . . Heavens, can they be storming police headquarters? Here, we shall have to get out on the job, Alonso."

"Don't be a fool, Francis, don't be a fool," shouted Tía.

"All right," Martinez picked up his hat sadly. "Let's go."

A scream rang out from below and then a crash resounded. They dashed downstairs.

Lucia lay upon the floor in Tía's room beside the bed, clad in her nightdress. The little altar was overturned and the image smashed into a dozen pieces; the light still hung by its wire, unextinguished. They lifted the girl to the bed and tried to restrain her.

"My husband—Rafael—Oh, Mother Mary, where is my husband?" she screamed. A rosary that had lain in a bowl upon the altar was clutched in her hand. "Sweet Mother of God have mercy," moaned Lucia.

"Hush, Lucia, listen to me, it's Tía speaking. Rafael won't be hurt."

"Pray for him, pray for him."



## LEAN MEN

"Rafael will be safe, he's outside the city, he'll not be in till the afternoon."

"Don't let him come in, Francis," wailed the sick woman.

"Look here, all this is madness," burst out Tía Benita. "Where is Rafael, and where's he going this afternoon? You'll have to keep him out or it will be the . . ." She looked round at the girl upon the bed, who was rolling wildly and biting the clothes in a paroxysm of terror. The firing, which had sagged, became louder.

"Send Tex to Vallidrerera, I'll do the other job," Alonso urged.

"No, you go," wailed Lucia, staring at Francis. "Don't send Alonso!"

"I'm not in command, *chico*, how are we going to get a message to him?"

"There'll be a runner at the Bear, he won't leave for another hour."

"I can't decide, let's go and find Pere."

The girl on the bed screamed again, they turned and gazed at her a moment.

"All right, Lucia." Francis had to shout to make her pay attention. "I'm sending Rafael to Vallidrerera." At the third repetition she seemed to understand. "Praised be the most holy Virgin," she whispered.

Tía suddenly switched off the light and with an angry expression scuffed aside the pieces of the fallen image.

"Help me to carry her into the other room, you men, and then get about your own business," she whispered fiercely, pressing Alonso's arm. "And good luck to you—with the revolution!"

They laid Lucia in her own bed, arranged to send the doctor and left Tía gently scolding the girl.

Teresa met them at the end of the street.

"Where have you been?" shouted Martinez, taking her by the shoulder brusquely.

"Pere has disappeared," replied the girl. "I couldn't help it, I ought to have stayed, I know," she panted, and flung herself against Alonso.

The Murcian embraced her fiercely.

"What's the news, La Roja, try to tell us consecutively," Francis prompted.

## TOO MUCH LEAD

"I'm all right," she replied with a note of disdain. "First. The general strike is complete. Secondly, Pere has been missing all the morning and the contacts have got all wrong. I've issued the order to close in on the variable centre No. 2 because of the change in events."

"Who authorized you?"

"It was agreed that in emergency anyone of the executive might."

"With two others," Alonso reminded her.

Francis hesitated a moment. "Yes, quite correct, La Roja, I agree."

"I agree," repeated Martinez.

"Then, Masera's dead. A guard stopped him as he was walking away from Building Trades' Headquarters this morning and demanded to see a letter he was carrying. Masera refused, and the guard shot him through the head, by the cloister door in See Street. Next, there's a terrific battle going on in Casco Viejo—three of ours are wounded but in hiding, about eighty arrested. The police have laid siege to the Building Trades' Syndicate Headquarters in Mercadors Street. That's where the big firing is coming from."

"Any of ours in it?"

"No—ours made an attack on the police after the siege had started, but they couldn't draw them off without serious engagement. Without orders they won't fight."

"We shall have to fight," ejaculated Alonso.

"Pere is in command," answered the girl.

"He was. Francis is chief now," the Murcian contested.

"Yes."

"To the Centre first. Vilanova and the others will be waiting. The anarchists must have decided to begin an attempt."

For a minute or two there was dead silence as they passed along the bottom of Layetana. It was an unearthly silence, for at that time the streets were usually thronged with the dock traffic and the converging streams from Icaria and Layetana. There they saw two vivid pictures typical of such days.

Outside a shuttered café a group of men were dancing a sardana out of bravado with shouts of defiance to "the

## LEAN MEN

bullets." Without warning a Mauser shot, followed by others, rang out farther up the street. The sardana dancers fled helter-skelter down the road.

In the same instant they saw Haircombs fanning herself as she made her way towards the barricade at the end of a side street whence the reports had proceeded.

In the little well formed by Villadecolls and Old Post Street, variable No. 2, they met the rest of the executive. A hundred or so of the contacts were loitering around behind the doors of cafés and houses sympathetic with them. A message was sent to Texido instructing him to proceed to Vallvidrera.

Authentic news of Pere was forthcoming. He had been arrested quite simply, surprised and unarmed he had been unable to shoot his way out. There was universal dissent from the policy of going without arms.

"I would have ordered the distribution," said Vilanova, "but I was afraid to take the responsibility without consulting the rest of you. The police have discovered one of the small dumps, by the way. The daughter of one of the chaps gave it away."

A runner came with a message that the Civil Governor had accepted the terms of surrender which the defenders of the Builders' Headquarters had sent out. The runner, a finely intelligent niece of Masera's, had brought the news directly from the Governor's office. She had gone in pretending to be suing for the release of a brother. The builders had stipulated that they should be allowed to surrender to the military authorities. They would prefer to fight rather than trust themselves to the mercy of the police. A company of soldiers was leaving at once for Mercadors Street. After an hour's delay, during which two more guards were wounded, Anguera de Sojo had consented, after receiving the assurance of the police colonel-in-chief that his corps would not be offended.

After discussion Francis announced his decision.

"It is definitely too early to launch an attack. Probably the anarchists will curl up after the surrender at Mercadors Street. I call an executive meeting for to-night. This strike has precipitated everything a month too soon on any reckoning, nevertheless we may have to fight."

Francis, Alonso, Teresa and Isidro the dwarf at once set

## TOO MUCH LEAD

out for the Plaza Real. Vilanova would have fresh tasks at the Northern Railway Station.

As they set out formally to keep contact with Texido's committee, the company of soldiers hurried by *en route* for Mercadors Street.

As the four entered Tapinería Street a shot rang out from a street which lay at right-angles to it. There was a shout of pain or rage from one of the group of urban guards standing there.

"We shall be safer going this way," Alonso remarked to Teresa. "This seems a respectable lot."

Tapinería Street was occupied by a large number of debaters, many of them of the middle and professional classes. The street buzzed with comment on the day's affairs.

As they approached the middle of the street, a cry rang out at the far end: "Halt!" A body of urban guards barred the way with drawn pistols. There was immediate panic among the well-dressed section. The workers, more accustomed to that peremptoriness, laughed a little nervously.

A succession of shrill whistles sounded behind them.

"Well, we're for it now," said Francis. "A fair capture."

"Hands up, everybody, hands up, hands up!" A pair of obviously frightened urban guards approached them; they backed against the wall with the remainder. Reinforcements of police arrived and began to joke with their colleagues. "Fine lot of fishes you've got here," called a short swarthy guard to an acquaintance. "What's the good of these?"

There was a superficial search of the prisoners. No arms were found. A few of the original group of police began to laugh over the affair. Then the order was given to fall in, and with hands lowered the captives were hustled into a column. Teresa and the dwarf were put behind Francis, Alonso, and an elderly gentleman dressed in English cloth. The order was given and they set out.

"Police headquarters," Alonso ejaculated as they wheeled round the corner. "Oh, boy, this is just bad luck."

The elderly gentleman began to breathe heavily.

They turned into the open space before the police headquarters. Something happened to cause confusion at the front of the column, and a shriek rang out. There was a wave

## LEAN MEN

of recoil. "Oh God, don't shoot!" screamed a man in front of Francis. Police were rushing from their headquarters manipulating the bolts of rifles. A guard ran towards their section and with incoherent cries of rage levelled his pistol at the elderly gentleman.

"No, no," he cried hoarsely, sinking to his knees. "We're not the builders, for the love of God!"

The guard fired and missed; the bullet smashed the shoulder of a youth in front of Alonso.

Rifles and pistols were cracking all along the column; two were down behind Teresa.

"Run for it!" yelled Alonso. The dwarf led the way, pitched forward, scrambled to his feet and ran on with one arm swinging limp. The terrible screams of the defenceless prisoners rose shrill above the firing.

Isidro tottered, they spun round to assist him and as they did so it seemed as if Alonso was lifted bodily from the ground.

"A-a-h!" he groaned and sank to his knees, both hands pressed to his lower breast. Teresa was struggling to free herself from a fallen man whose panic-stricken hands clutched her dress.

Francis dashed to her side and wrenched the hand loose. The fallen man rolled over and lay still.

"Alonso," he groaned. "My brother," and ran towards the Murcian with arms held forward. The Murcian lifted his crooked arms from his body like a child asking to be lifted. Francis raised him from his knees; he lay limp in his arms, his lips pressed tightly together and face half-averted.

"Alonso—my brother." The poet's lips burst open and the scalding blood frothed over their bodies. Teresa stood motionless, her hands clutching her hair, while the bullets continued to whizz past them.

Blinded and confused with tears and the frenzy of despair, Francis dragged Alonso to the wall. A bullet crashed into a garbage bin beside him as he bent over the Murcian. He could not speak; he wanted to pour out words of love, hot surging love warm as the blood pouring from the poet's mouth. Alonso opened his eyes again. "A-a-a-h," he groaned and struggled to raise himself. "Too . . . much. . . ." He choked and sank down again.

Teresa broke free from the paralysis of her grief, and flung

## TOO MUCH LEAD

herself beside her lover, and kissed him upon his smeared face, and screamed once loudly.

"Teresa . . ." he gasped and once more made desperate efforts to get up. "A-a-a-h." The moan died away as he fell back, dead.

There was a report immediately behind them and an oath. Isidro was facing the guard, waving his sound arm frenziedly. The rifle jerked into aim, pointed straight at the girl.

Francis leapt to his feet and as he did so Isidro rushed at the guard. The rifle cracked and the dwarf spun round, hung a moment and fell, his face blown away.

"Come on, girl, run!" he shouted. The guard had rushed back to the other side of the road. The firing was growing thinner.

"No!" The girl clutched Alonso's body to her, oblivious of the blood which made horror of her breast.

"Come on, Teresa . . ." he yelled.

"Run," she replied; he could barely hear her voice. "Fight . . . fight."

He wanted to dash into the ranks of the police and destroy life. He looked round desperately searching for a weapon.

"Run, Francis . . ." screamed the girl. "Make them fight!"

"Yes!" he choked, and gazing a moment at the girl, turned and raced down a side street. Behind him the firing had ceased.

Total darkness lay over the docks. They swerved and raced for the cover of timber stacks which the urban guards had abandoned when he and Elipe had opened fire on them from the open. The clatter of hoofs swept up behind them. Mounted guard.

"Follow me," he called and sped across the waist of Mallorca wharf.

Once again danger. At the end of the Paseo a posse of civil guard opened fire on them, and their escape through Barceloneta was barred.

At the New Vulcan Works fresh challenge. The guard, an urban, fled at their first warning shot.

"We're trapped now," said Elipe as they stood at the top of the breakwater steps. "There's no way out of this."

## LEAN MEN

Francis dashed to the seaward side. There were lights in the bathing pavilion. "No good, that's where they've barracked the police drafts," gasped the strong man.

"There's one chance only then. One or two motor-boats are moored down here, we may get across the harbour."

"And be wiped up as we land." Elipe made a gesture of despair.

"That would be just another piece of bad luck. Think of the future, man, the struggle."

"Yes!"

They dropped lightly over the parapet on to the thin roof of a shed, rolled down it and leapt to the ground. They were within the boiler yard.

"Alto!" The metallic voice rang clear.

They blundered madly into the darkness, seeking some stack of refuse or junk from behind which to put up the last fight.

Where Elipe was now he did not know. He peered out on the two civil guards talking outside the old boiler within whose half-stripped shell he had taken refuge. Thought was suspended. Love, hatred, grief, all emotions were suspended; he was just watchfulness, a pair of eyes gazing out from a taut body, awaiting a desperate end. The guards did not know of his presence so near them, but soon they would commence to examine their surroundings.

Well, they were civils, a ruthless, unscrupulous force, but brave and soldierly. They were better company than a pair of urbans.

A third civil appeared carrying a coke devil. The three lit the fire and stood talking intermittently. When he breathed deeply he could hear the hiss flung back by the plates against which he leaned. . . .

Grief had returned and driven out hatred. The sole remaining guard was seated by the glowing fire, wrapped in his cloak. His rifle stood against an old vice-bench.

The fine and the true dead; Alonso dead, Masera dead. Isidro the venal and slow of understanding, the devoted, dead also. Teresa where? In prison doubtless.

And defeat. Justifiable revolt had been impossible. Their scouts had not been able to find a single important leader of

## TOO MUCH LEAD

the syndicates. Yet the strike, declared in protest against judicial crimes in the Model which had not been committed, had been called off in the face of that tragedy, in face of that splendour of courage scores of brave little bands had displayed before the eyes of their anarchist leaders. To have given battle would have meant stark disaster.

And who had betrayed their hiding-place, that they had had to fight their way through a cordon? One of the police had cried: "There's the Englishman."

An hour, perhaps two passed, the guard dozed before the fire.

And then love returned. Teresa, where was she? Prison could add nothing to her grief; love and pity burned into a fiercer fire. He drew the pistol from his pocket; the city called, Life called, wailing in sorrow, asking delivery of the child within its womb. He gazed at the sleeping outpost. Was this man's death justified? By the barest balance, no.

"Challenge him, give him a chance and shoot it out." Hunger of life and freedom combined with the call of the struggle to urge the compromise upon conscience.

Another hour passed. Still the guard sat by the fire. Another name cried now in his mind beside Teresa. Elizabeth. All the peace, the loveliness and the warmth of life called to him in her name. Would he see her again? Would the years that must separate them if he were taken be too much for her?

He levelled the pistol, took aim, tightened the whole of his hand. "Shoot," said hunger of living. The love of two women said "Shoot."

Life itself, enshrined within his mind, spoke clearly. No. Reason stepped in and tempted conscience. When deliberate lying, political deceit, interest, cunning, treachery, ignorance, vanity were the guiding forces of government, as they were, was not the bond of duty to the State dissolved?

Yes, replied reason to its own question. The barrel steadied and hung motionless.

But Morality springs from within, is Life itself, answered conscience inflexibly.

Within conscience itself was division, argument.

Was this man's death justified? By the barest of margins, No. One must learn to stake one's life upon the barest of margins. That was ripeness, maturity. He knew now the



## LEAN MEN

meaning of those words, "Ripeness is all." The barrel wavered, lowered. Quietly he laid the weapon upon the mushy scale of the floor.

This was a vigil; he was waiting for a dawn that must change life. And the essence of a vigil was belief and profession. When next would he be able to serve the Revolution? He could not hazard a guess. "I believe and I will serve," he murmured.

The guard sprang to his feet; the stuttering bark of a motor-boat engine being started came from below the wharf edge. "Alto!" cried the guard, and seizing his rifle ran to the edge and fired over the echoing water.

He slipped from the boiler like a shadow, clambered over the gates silently and doubled without hesitation past the New Vulcan yard, and slowed into a steady walk. The endless dangers and difficulties of escape were clearly before him in his imagination. Could he do it? A brief respite, that was all, a little while of love and beauty, Elizabeth, music and rest, and then he would return. They would expect him. Vilanova would give his message to the others, to Teresa. They would build up the Party, fight again soon, perhaps be defeated, no matter, the workers would lose every battle but the last.

Hastening, he disappeared like a merging shadow into the darkness of the city.

The cathedral bell ceased to boom. The flower-seller's handcart threw off sweet clouds of cool fragrance as she scooped the shining water from the lapping trough of the fountain and sprinkled it over the blossoms. The three women sniffed eagerly at the morning air as the handcart rattled away over the cobbles. Then a young mare whinnied, and the carter dismounted from the wagon and led her to the fountain; the dabbling children stood back as the animal curved back its lips to drink, straining to reach the trough, rubbing its glossy knees against the bollards. Once more the runnel of water whispered into the rippled basin.

Ambrosia sighed, and after glancing at Gertrudis, remarked philosophically to Doña Desposoris: "By their fruits ye shall know them, by their fruits."

# PENGUIN BOOKS

COMPLETE LIST OF PUBLICATIONS TO JANUARY, 1938

---

## FICTION *orange covers*

- 2 A FAREWELL TO ARMS by Ernest Hemingway
- 3 POET'S PUB by Eric Linklater
- 4 MADAME CLAIRE by Susan Ertz
- 8 WILLIAM by E. H. Young
- 9 GONE TO EARTH by Mary Webb
- 12 THE PURPLE LAND by W. H. Hudson
- 13 PATROL by Philip Macdonald
- 15 FOUR FRIGHTENED PEOPLE by E. Arnot Robertson
- 16 THE EDWARDIANS by V. Sackville-West
- 17 THE INFORMER by Liam O'Flaherty
- 19 THE STRANGE CASE OF MISS ANNIE SPRAGG by Louis Bromfield
- 23 ESTHER WATERS by George Moore
- 24 HANGMAN'S HOUSE by Donn Byrne
- 27 MY MAN JEEVES by P. G. Wodehouse
- 28 THE OWLS' HOUSE by Crosbie Garstin
- 39 THE WALLET OF KAI LUNG by Ernest Bramah
- 41 CROME YELLOW by Aldous Huxley
- 42 DEATH OF A HERO by Richard Aldington
- 43 A SAFETY MATCH by Ian Hay
- 44 A CUCKOO IN THE NEST by Ben Travers
- 45 THE GLEN O' WEEPING by Marjorie Bowen
- 47 THE LONELY PLOUGH by Constance Holme
- 48 A PASSAGE TO INDIA by E. M. Forster
- 49 THE JUNGLE by Upton Sinclair
- 50 THE W PLAN by Graham Seton
- 52 THE SPANISH FARM by R. H. Mottram
- 53 DUSTY ANSWER by Rosamond Lehmann
- 54 I AM JONATHAN SCRIVENER by Claude Houghton
- 57 THE BLACK DIAMOND by Francis Brett Young

COMPLETE LIST OF PENGUIN BOOKS

---

- 59 THREE WIVES by Beatrice Kean Seymour  
72 STILL SHE WISHED FOR COMPANY by Margaret Irwin  
73 MR. WESTON'S GOOD WINE by T. F. Powys  
75 DECLINE AND FALL by Evelyn Waugh  
76 DANGEROUS AGES by Rose Macaulay  
80 DAWN OF RECKONING by James Hilton  
81 TARKA THE OTTER by Henry Williamson  
83 THE POACHER by H. E. Bates  
84 LOLLY WILLOWES by Sylvia Townsend Warner  
85 SIR ISUMBRAS AT THE FORD by D. K. Broster  
86 THESE CHARMING PEOPLE by Michael Arlen  
87 GREENERY STREET by Denis Mackail  
88 THE GREEN LACQUER PAVILION by Helen Beaucherk  
91 GHOST STORIES OF AN ANTIQUARY by M. R. James  
92 THE HAMPSHIRE WONDER by J. D. Beresford  
93 WILD STRAWBERRIES by Angela Thirkell  
94 SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE GREYHOUND by John  
Hampson  
95 THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY by G. K. Chesterton  
96 SELECTED MODERN SHORT STORIES selected by Alan  
Steele  
97 SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M. by Somerville and  
Ross  
102 YOUTH RIDES OUT by Beatrice Kean Seymour  
103 A TALL SHIP by "Bartimeus"  
104 DEEP WATERS by W. W. Jacobs  
105 MANTRAP by Sinclair Lewis  
106 NOW EAST, NOW WEST by Susan Ertz  
107 PRIVATE WORLDS by Phyllis Bottome  
108 KAI LUNG UNROLLS HIS MAT by Ernest Bramah  
109 THE FIDDLER by Sarah Gertrude Millin  
112 CHILDREN OF THE EARTH by Ethel Mannin  
120 PENGUIN PARADE (I)—New Stories  
121-2 LEAN MEN by Ralph Bates (in two volumes)  
123 SOLDIERS' PAY by William Faulkner  
125 AN INDIAN DAY by Edward Thompson

**CRIME FICTION** *green covers*

- 5 THE UNPLEASANTNESS AT THE BELLONA CLUB by  
Dorothy L. Sayers
- 6 THE MURDER ON THE LINKS by Agatha Christie
- 34 MR. FORTUNE, PLEASE by H. C. Bailey
- 58 THE POISONED CHOCOLATES CASE by Anthony  
Berkeley
- 61 THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES by Agatha Christie
- 62 THE MISSING MONEYLENDER by W. Stanley Sykes
- 64 THE FOUR JUST MEN by Edgar Wallace
- 65 THE MAN IN THE DARK by John Ferguson
- 78 TRENT'S LAST CASE by E. C. Bentley
- 79 THE RASP by Philip Macdonald
- 89 THE DOCUMENTS IN THE CASE by Dorothy L. Sayers  
(with Robert Eustace)
- 90 THE SANFIELD SCANDAL by Richard Keverne
- 98 THE MURDERS IN PRAED STREET by John Rhode
- 101 MR. JUSTICE RAFFLES by E. W. Hornung
- 111 THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES by A. Conan Doyle
- 124 IT WALKS BY NIGHT by John Dickson Carr
- 127 THE HAVERING PLOT by Richard Keverne

**TRAVEL & ADVENTURE** *cerise covers*

- 60 THE DARK INVADER by Captain von Rintelen
- 66 THE SURGEON'S LOG by J. Johnston Abraham
- 67 MY SOUTH SEA ISLAND by Eric Muspratt
- 68 WITH MYSTICS AND MAGICIANS IN TIBET by Alexandra  
David-Neel
- 69 } SOME EXPERIENCES OF A NEW GUINEA RESIDENT
- 70 } MAGISTRATE by C. A. W. Monckton (in two volumes)
- 82 UNDERTONES OF WAR by Edmund Blunden
- 99 } THE WORST JOURNEY IN THE WORLD : ANTARCTIC
- 100 } 1910-1913 by Apsley Cherry-Garrard (in two volumes)
- 113 THE SECRET OF THE SAHARA by Rosita Forbes
- 126 TRADER HORN by Alfred Aloysius Horn

## COMPLETE LIST OF PENGUIN BOOKS

---

### **BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIRS** *dark blue covers*

- 1 ARIEL by André Maurois
- 7 TWENTY-FIVE by Beverley Nichols
- 71 CONFESSIONS AND IMPRESSIONS by Ethel Mannin
- 77 GREY WOLF : MUSTAFA KEMAL by H. C. Armstrong
- 110 DISRAELI by André Maurois
- 114-5 FOCH : MAN OF ORLEANS by B. H. Liddell Hart
- 128 LORD OF ARABIA : IBN SAUD by H. C. Armstrong

### **MISCELLANEOUS** *yellow covers*

- 116 ON ENGLAND by Stanley Baldwin
- 118 WHILE ROME BURNS by Alexander Woolcott
- 119 BILLIARDS AND SNOOKER FOR AMATEUR PLAYERS by  
Horace Lindrum
- 129-30 THE WEEK-END BOOK (in two volumes)

### **DRAMA** *red covers*

- 117 SEVEN FAMOUS ONE-ACT PLAYS

### **PENGUIN SPECIAL**

- 51 GERMANY PUTS THE CLOCK BACK by Edgar Mowrer
- 

## **THE PENGUIN SHAKESPEARE**

A sixpenny Shakespeare specially edited for Penguin Books by Dr. G. B. Harrison. Each volume contains a chronological list of Shakespeare's works, a short life of Shakespeare, a note on the Elizabethan Theatre with a drawing, a brief introduction to the Play, a Glossary and an Index. All this material is completely new. The following plays have already been issued :

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| B 1 TWELFTH NIGHT                | B 7 THE TEMPEST               |
| B 2 HAMLET                       | B 8 THE MERCHANT OF<br>VENICE |
| B 3 HENRY THE FIFTH              | B 9 RICHARD II                |
| B 4 KING LEAR                    | B 10 ROMEO AND JULIET         |
| B 5 AS YOU LIKE IT               | B 11 JULIUS CAESAR            |
| B 6 A MIDSUMMER<br>NIGHT'S DREAM | B 12 MACBETH                  |

Other volumes to follow shortly.

**PELICAN BOOKS** *light blue covers*

A series of books on science, economics, history, sociology, archaeology, etc. Edited by V. K. Krishna Menon :—*Advisory editors* : H. L. Beales, Reader in Economic History, University of London ; W. E. Williams, Secretary, the British Institute of Adult Education ; Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, Secretary of the Zoological Society, London, 1903-35.

- A 1 } THE INTELLIGENT WOMAN'S GUIDE TO SOCIALISM,  
A 2 } CAPITALISM, SOVIETISM AND FASCISM by Bernard  
Shaw (in two volumes)
- A 3 LAST AND FIRST MEN by Olaf Stapledon
- A 4 DIGGING UP THE PAST by Sir Leonard Woolley (*with 32 half-tone plates*)
- A 5 A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WORLD by H. G. Wells (*with numerous maps*)
- A 6 PRACTICAL ECONOMICS by G. D. H. Cole (*first publication*)
- A 7 ESSAYS IN POPULAR SCIENCE by Julian Huxley (*illustrated*)
- A 8 THE FLOATING REPUBLIC by Dobrée and Manwaring (*The mutinies at the Nore and Spithead in 1797*)
- A 9 A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE (I) by Elie Halévy
- A 10 THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE by Sir James Jeans (*with 2 half-tone plates*)
- A 11 THE GREAT VICTORIANS (I) edited by H. J. and Hugh Massingham
- A 12 THE INEQUALITY OF MAN by J. B. S. Haldane
- A 13 LIBERTY IN THE MODERN STATE by Harold J. Laski (*with new introduction*)
- A 14 SOCIAL LIFE IN THE INSECT WORLD by J. H. Fabre (*with 15 half-tone plates*)
- A 15 THE GROWTH OF CIVILISATION by W. J. Perry (*with several maps*)
- A 16 A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE (II) by Elie Halévy
- A 17 A BOOK OF ENGLISH POETRY collected by G. B. Harrison (*a new anthology*)
- A 18 AFTER THE DELUGE by Leonard Woolf
- A 19 MEDIEVAL PEOPLE by Eileen Power (*with 8 half-tone plates*)
- A 20 VISION AND DESIGN by Roger Fry

More Volumes to follow.

### **N.B.**

New volumes are continually being added to Penguin and Pelican Books. Please ask your bookseller for the latest list, as further volumes may have been issued since this book was printed. Suggestions of books for inclusion in the series are always welcome.

